



Playing on our strengths to deliver first-class performance.

EFG is delighted to partner with Benjamin Grosvenor.

EFG Private Banking

efginternational.com

EFG International's global private banking network operates in around 40 locations worldwide, including Zurich, Geneva, Lugano, London, Madrid, Milan, Monaco, Luxembourg, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney, Miami, Bogotá and Montevideo. In the United Kingdom, EFG Private Bank Limited's principal place of business and registered office is located at Leconfield House, Curzon Street, London W1J 5JB, T + 44 20 7491 9111. EFG Private Bank Limited is authorised by the Prudential Regulation Authority and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority and the Prudential Regulation Authority. EFG Private Bank Limited is a member of the London Stock Exchange. Registered in England and Wales as no. 2321802. EFG Private Bank Ltd is a subsidiary of EFG International.

THE WORLD'S BEST CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS

Est 1923 · JANUARY 2020

GRAMOPHONE

gramophone.co.uk

BEETHOVEN

250th
anniversary

INCLUDING

Beethoven's music and
the history of recording

The mighty Hammerklavier:
the best version to own

Simon Callow: what
Beethoven means to me

PLUS

We pay tribute to
Mariss Jansons and
Stephen Cleobury

Sheku Kanneh-Mason
on Elgar's Cello Concerto



BEETHOVEN THE COMPLETE WORKS 80 CDs **Out Now**

Drawing on the riches of the Warner Classics catalogue, legendary recordings from the age of the LP are complemented by the best of the CD era and by a wealth of new recordings of rarely heard works that are ripe for discovery. A comprehensive and most satisfying tribute to Beethoven, a transformative force who has enhanced the lives of music-lovers for more than two centuries.

Featuring: Artemis Quartet, Daniel Barenboim, Rudolf Buchbinder, Renaud Capuçon, Dietrich Fischer-Dieskau, Carlo Maria Giulini, Bernard Haitink, Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Otto Klemperer, Stephen Kovacevich, Yo-Yo Ma, Yehudi Menuhin, Itzhak Perlman, Jacqueline du Pré, András Schiff, János Starker



FAZIL SAY THE COMPLETE PIANO SONATAS 9 CDs **Out 17 January**

In a suitably heroic fashion, Fazil Say has recorded all 32 of the composer's piano sonatas. He sees the sonatas as "a sacred text for musicians" and Beethoven as "A revolutionary composer starting to create music 50 to 100 years ahead of its time," adding that: "When we interpret a composer's work, we need to remain faithful to it. In other words, we need to feel like a composer".



QUATUOR EBÈNE THE COMPLETE STRING QUARTETS 7 CDs **Out 13 March**

The French ensemble is marking the 250th anniversary of Beethoven's birth with a global tour of 21 countries. In the course of their Beethoven Around the World tour, the Ébène will make live recordings in seven different cities: Vienna, Philadelphia, Tokyo, São Paulo, Melbourne, Nairobi and Paris.



BEETHOVEN 2020 THE PLAYLIST **Scan to listen on Spotify**

From the *Moonlight Sonata* to *Ode to Joy*, explore the depths of Romantic passion with Daniel Barenboim, Stephen Kovacevich, Martha Argerich, Simon Rattle and more.



GRAMOPHONE

ISOUNDS OF AMERICA

A special eight-page section focusing on recent recordings from the US and Canada

Bielawa • Jacobsen • Kernis

'My Outstretched Hand'

Bielawa My Outstretched Hand^a C Jacobsen

If I Were Not Me Kernis Remembering the Sea

San Francisco Girls Chorus; ^aTrinity Youth Chorus;

The Knights / Eric Jacobsen

Supertrain © STRO14 (51' • DDD • T/t)



The three works here were all composed in 2016.

As in the previous release of music by Lisa Bielawa to have come my way, the made-for-TV opera *Vireo* (Orange Mountain Music, 7/19), the performers for her cantata *My Outstretched Hand* span the United States: from California to New York, the base for the Trinity Youth Chorus (who also took part in *Vireo*) and The Knights chamber orchestra. Bielawa's cantata sets self-revelatory texts from 1901 by the then 19-year-old Mary MacLane which traverse a remarkable range of moods and attitudes, from youthful defiance to something decidedly less confident, even imploring.

The two choirs cope well with the complex vocal writing – at one point they have a kind of 'Socratic dialogue' – though occasionally there are intonational infelicities. These are more problematic in Aaron Jay Kernis's wonderful triptych *Remembering the Sea* (*Souvenir de la mer*), his heartfelt response to the Paris and San Bernardino massacres of 2015. The specially commissioned text by Kai Hoffman-Krull is interleaved with quotes from Whitman (*Leaves of Grass*, of course) to devastating effect and the San Francisco Girls Chorus shape the music beautifully under Eric Jacobsen's direction, but some of the very high writing – as at the work's final climax – is audibly beyond them.

Eric Jacobsen's brother Colin composed *If I Were Not Me*, a thoughtful diptych (a scherzo and passacaglia, more or less) to two texts by Lydia Davis. It is nicely sung but Jacobsen's treatment of the second, 'Head, Heart', is no equal for the heart-stopping pathos of the words. There is a fundamental simplicity and directness to

these lines, particularly 'I want them back, says heart', that I am not sure any music could adequately express, but Jacobsen's polystylistics border on the trivial. A final word about The Knights: excellent accompanists, they are the element that binds all three performances together.

Guy Rickards

Chopin

'Late Masterpieces'

Piano Sonata No 3, Op 58. Barcarolle, Op 60.

Berceuse, Op 57. Three Mazurkas, Op 56.

Polonaise-fantaisie, Op 61. Scherzo No 4, Op 54

Sandro Russo *pf*

Steinway & Sons © STNS30125 (77' • DDD)



For a pianist who usually takes great chances in concert, Sandro Russo's square phrasing in Chopin's Fourth Scherzo's Trio and slightly inhibited approach to the outer sections' rapid runs and dotted rhythms suggests that he might be studio-shy. Yet perhaps the microphone's unforgiving presence factors into Russo's concentrated delineation of the Berceuse's two-part right-hand writing. Op 56's first and third Mazurkas abound with colourful inner-voice activity, although Russo's fast traversal of the C major No 2 undermines the music's earthy swagger.

The *Polonaise-fantaisie* is memorable for Russo's flexible phrasing and organic transitions from one episode to the next. The pianist's astutely paced and dynamically charged final pages compensate for his somewhat rambling introspective stretches and not-so-carefully gauged trilled chords. What starts off as a decent, regulation model Chopin Barcarolle gradually turns poetic and heartfelt midway, and, thankfully, Russo resists today's common temptation to speed up the big chordal passage prior to the coda.

Russo yields little to other comparably imaginative and characterful renditions of the B minor Sonata's *Allegro maestoso*, and his essentially line-orientated pianism is

exactly what Chopin's knotty polyphony requires. The Scherzo is on the sober side, yet crisply and purposefully articulated. While Russo begins the *Largo* with sustained steadiness, his little expressive ritards and caesuras in the central episode cause my attention to wander. By contrast, the understated nobility of Russo's finale generates a satisfying cumulative narrative, and one will notice Russo's particular attention to the accents and rests that often catch pianists unaware. Unlike many recent Steinway & Sons releases stemming from the company's Spirio reproducing piano files, this disc captures Russo in the flesh, so to speak, with producer Joseph Patrych's Steinway regulated to tip-top standards by Kenneth Farnum, Jr. **Jed Distler**

Holst

The Planets, Op 32^a.

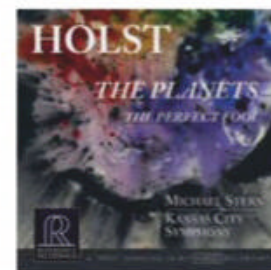
The Perfect Fool - Ballet Music

Kansas City Symphony ^aChorus

and Orchestra / Michael Stern

Reference Recordings © RR146SACD

(61' • DDD/DSD)



The Planets has received dozens of recordings since its earliest accounts in the

1920s under the composer's baton. And no wonder: the seven-movement work (Pluto was discovered in 1930, some 15 years after Holst wrote his suite, and of course no longer has planetary status anyway) is both a vibrantly atmospheric depiction of astrological marvels and a visionary orchestral showpiece.

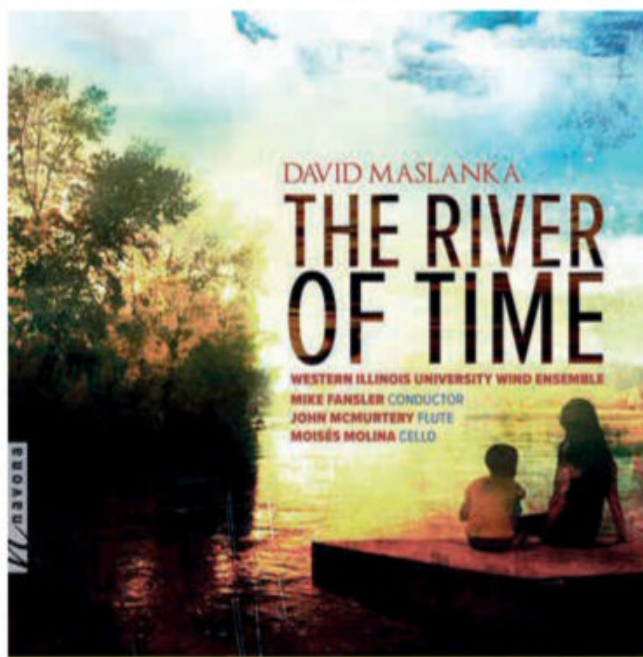
The Kansas City Symphony seize the day, and night, on their new recording under music director Michael Stern. Some performances of *The Planets* focus more on the score's colourful surfaces than on its dramatic mysteries and jubilation but Stern's concept pays close attention to every alluring aspect of Holst's achievement. The vivid and often asymmetrical rhythmic elements are highlighted to a lucid degree, even as the mesmerising textures are beautifully etched.



SECOND WIND DAVE CAMWELL

Saxophonist **Dave Camwell**'s interpretations of pieces on **SECOND WIND** impressively demonstrate the capabilities of the instrument in music spanning three centuries, including new saxophone arrangements of pieces by J. S. Bach, Vivaldi, and Handel. **NAVONA RECORDS (NV6253)**

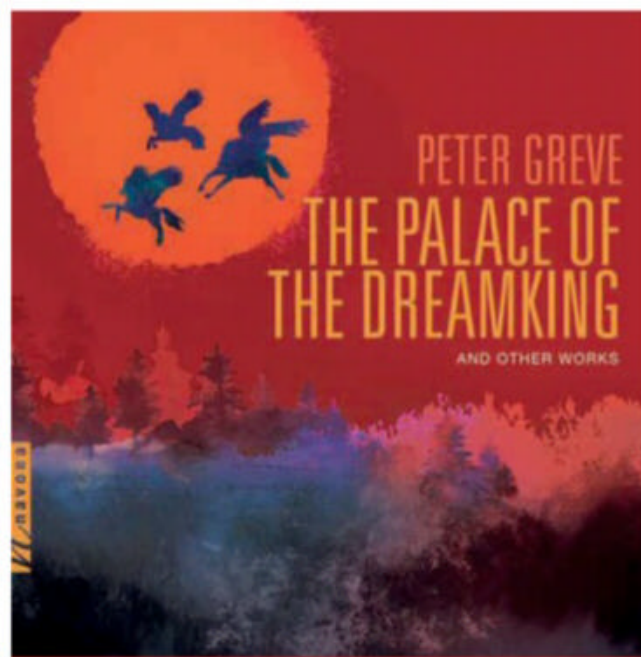
www.davecamwell.com
www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6253



THE RIVER OF TIME MIKE FANSLER

On **THE RIVER OF TIME**, conductor **Mike Fansler** and the **Western Illinois University Wind Ensemble** bring to life **David Maslanka**'s final composition, completed posthumously by the composer's son, **Matthew Maslanka**. **NAVONA RECORDS (NV6261)**

www.wiu.edu/cofac/bands
www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6261

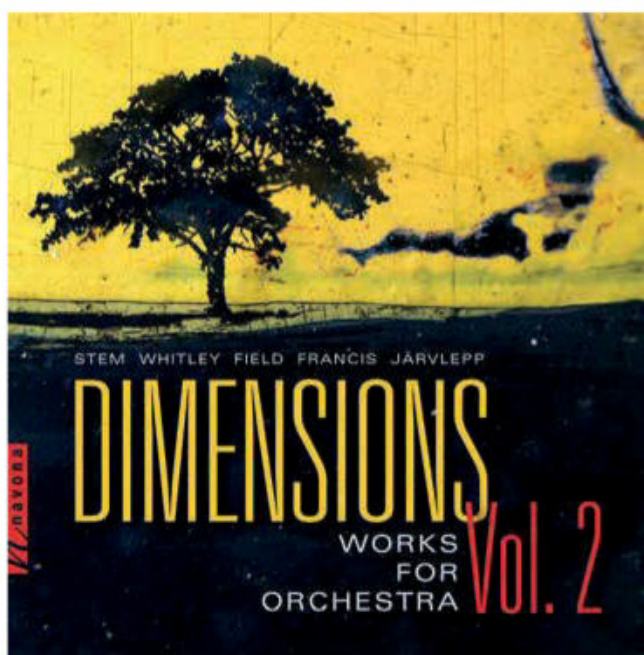


THE PALACE OF THE DREAMKING PETER GREVE

Peter Greve's **THE PALACE OF THE DREAMKING** offers a cross-section of Greve's eclectic body of compositional work, drawing inspiration from the Baroque masters, Scandinavian folklore, and traditional organ music.

NAVONA RECORDS (NV6257)

www.petergreve.nl
www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6257



DIMENSIONS VOL. 2 BRIAN FIELD

Brian Field's *A Letter from Camp* illustrates the emotional turmoil of war on **DIMENSIONS VOL. 2**. Arranged for soprano and orchestra, the piece brings **Walt Whitman**'s American Civil War-era poem into the 21st Century by highlighting the human suffering of families of those engaged in armed conflict.

NAVONA RECORDS (NV6251)

www.brianfield.com
www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6251



CLAY JUG EDIE HILL

CLAY JUG, featuring the multi-GRAMMY winning choir **The Crossing**, highlights works for a cappella choir and choir accompanied by chamber ensemble. The album demonstrates **Edie Hill**'s keen sensitivity to ensemble texture and harmonic density as she incorporates text across four languages.

NAVONA RECORDS (NV6073)

www.ediehill.com
www.navonarecords.com/catalog/nv6073



WITHIN MY SOUL AKEMI NAITO

WITHIN MY SOUL by composer **Akemi Naito** features three pieces ranging from mono-opera to solo percussion performances. Each is inspired by diverse pieces of literature – the poems of **Emily Brontë**, **Kobo Abe**'s *The Woman in the Dunes*, and the works of Japanese monk-poet **Saigyō**.

RAVELLO RECORDS (RR8022)

www.akeminaito.com
www.ravellorerecords.com/catalog/rr8022

LISTENING ROOM

Click the camera icon while searching in your **Spotify** mobile app and scan the code below to listen to selections from these albums.



AVAILABLE NOW FOR PURCHASE OR STREAMING



Navona Records, Ravello Records, Big Round Records, and Ansonica Records are imprints of **PARMA Recordings**.
www.parmarecordings.com





Pianistic finesse and musical intelligence: Stanislav Khristenko plays Prokofiev with control and fluidity

Stern lingers on the noble theme in the middle of the otherwise gleeful 'Jupiter' to stirring effect. The orchestra is everywhere responsive and full of character, whether the music is hushed or exuberant. In the final 'Neptune', the women of the Kansas City Symphony Chorus sing their wordless lines with shimmering refinement. In the end, another recording of *The Planets* is more than justified.

Heavenly matters are not all that make this disc welcome. Stern and his players are equally persuasive in the charming ballet music from Holst's one-act opera *The Perfect Fool*, written several years after *The Planets*. Although the opera has faded from the repertoire, the four pieces performed here are choice examples of the composer's gift for conjuring descriptive and captivating sound worlds. **Donald Rosenberg**

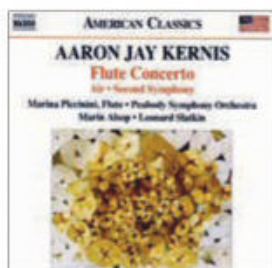
Kernis

Air^a. Flute Concerto^a. Second Symphony^b

^aMarina Piccinini // Peabody Symphony

Orchestra / ^aLeonard Slatkin, ^bMarin Alsop

Naxos American Classics © 8 559830 (66' • DDD)



We do not hear enough of the music of Aaron Jay Kernis (b1960). I was

mightily impressed with his recent (2015) Third String Quartet, *River*, a few months ago (Sono Luminus, 9/19) and was full of expectation for this Naxos album containing the Flute Concerto written the same year, and two earlier works from the 1990s. I have not been disappointed.

The Concerto was written for Marina Piccinini and among its co-commissioners were the Peabody Institute and Detroit Symphony Orchestra, of which Leonard Slatkin is Music Director Laureate. As the composer notes in the booklet, it is a work of light (the second and fourth movements) and dark (the first and third); there is a darker side to the 'Taran-Tulla' finale, too. If Nielsen (mostly) good-naturedly broke the mould for 'pretty' flute concertos, others have developed the form's expressive depth since, John McCabe not least, and Kernis's riveting work shares their double-edged quality.

Piccinini has no trouble with the concerto's rapidly changing moods and virtuoso demands but has a chance to show off the lyrical quality of her playing in the not insubstantial, at times Coplandesque *Air*, originally penned as a duo for Joshua Bell in 1995; this version, for flute and orchestra, is from 1996.

Fine as these works are, the most electrifying piece – and performance – is of the emotionally charged Second Symphony (1991), begun after the end of and as a reaction to the First Gulf War. Although not programmatic, the movement sequence of 'Alarm', 'Air/Ground' and 'Barricade' gives an indication of the work's expressive thrust. 'Alarm' is reminiscent of some of the late Christopher Rouse's more vivid orchestral works (no bad thing; he also wrote a fine Flute Concerto), but Kernis is his own man, as the symphony's gripping denouement affirms. The orchestral performances throughout are very eloquent; strongly recommended.

Guy Rickards

Prokofiev

Ten Pieces from Romeo and Juliet, Op 75.

Ten Pieces, Op 12

Stanislav Khristenko *pf*

Steinway & Sons © STNS30114 (57' • DDD)



Since his 2013 victory in the Cleveland International Piano Competition, Stanislav

Khristenko has been amassing a strong online profile through live performance videos and a varied stream of CD releases

GRAMOPHONE

Choose the right
subscription for you

- THE GRAMOPHONE CLUB
 - PRINT EDITION
 - DIGITAL CLUB
 - DIGITAL EDITION
 - REVIEWS DATABASE



THE WORLD'S LEADING CLASSICAL MUSIC REVIEWS MAGAZINE

EXPAND YOUR COLLECTION

With the world's most authoritative classical music reviews section, written by our unrivalled, international and objective panel of expert reviewers

INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS

We are devoted to exploring the artists stamping their mark on recording today, with captivating features and exclusive interviews

COMPOSER PROFILES

We celebrate composers both past and present, providing you with a unique perspective on the lives and work of the giants of the classical music world

SOUNDS OF AMERICA

Every issue includes a special eight-page section focusing on exciting new releases from North American artists and labels

Visit www.magsubscriptions.com/gramophone
or call +44 (0)1722 716997

Pictured: Violinist Janine Jansen (DECCA / © Marco Borggreve) who featured on the January 2016 cover of Gramophone. Full annual retail price for print only (13 issues) is \$142.87; print only annual subscription or Digital Edition or Reviews Database (\$101); Digital Club (\$134); Gramophone Club (\$167). If choosing a print option, an addition overseas P+P charge will be added at \$35.75 (Outside EU). If you have a subscription enquiry then please email subscriptions@markallengroup.com



ranging from Soler and Schumann to Ernst Krenek. Prokofiev occupies Khristenko's second Steinway & Sons disc.

In the 10 pieces that the composer arranged from *Romeo and Juliet*, Khristenko channels his robust sonority and expert technique towards balletic ends. For example, he resists the understandable temptation to sprint through 'Juliet as a Young Girl' or the 'Mercutio' movement, keeping the fast tempos within reasonably danceable parameters. By contrast, he shifts the 'Friar Laurence' movement's commonly introspective landscape towards what one might consider 'walking meditation'.

While his crisply dry articulation seems more appropriate than, say, Vladimir Ashkenazy's wilting legato in 'Dance of the Girls with Lilies', his fussy tempo adjustments get in the way. But Khristenko's fluidity, directness and long-lined control engender a natural unfolding build in the long final movement.

His pianistic finesse and musical intelligence click more decisively in the Op 12 group, which are essentially character pieces. The opening March sports a well-grounded rhythmic snap and impressively even scales, while the pianist humorously yet tastefully milks

the Gavotte's left-hand grace notes. The Mazurka's idiosyncratic, closely voiced chords slither in and out of one another through finger legato alone. Khristenko also balances the Capriccio's busy counterpoint so that the left and right hands converse rather than compete, and evokes a caustically lilting 'merry-go-round' in the concluding Scherzo.

In short, Prokofiev's Op 12 and Op 75 complement each other well as a CD coupling, especially in Khristenko's fine performances, all expertly mastered from Steinway Spirio High Definition files.

Jed Distler

Louise M Davies Symphony Hall, San Francisco

Our monthly guide to North American venues

Year opened 1980

Architect Pietro Belluschi; Skidmore, Owings & Merrill

Capacity 2743

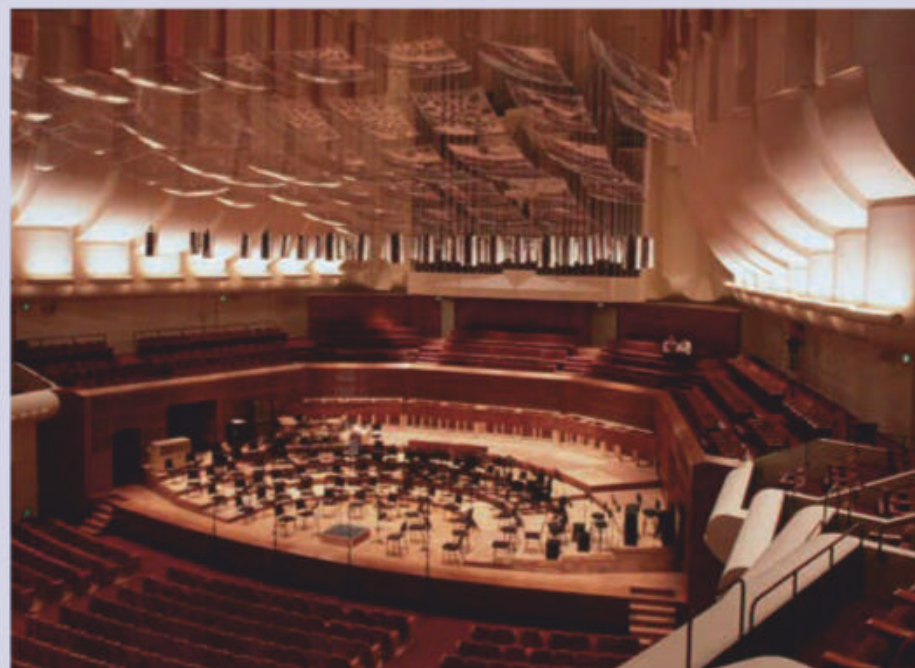
Resident ensemble San Francisco Symphony

The San Francisco Symphony's quest to secure its own concert hall resulted in the single most significant expansion of the city's cultural life in nearly half a century. Louise M Davies Symphony Hall opened on September 16, 1980, as part of the San Francisco War Memorial and Performing Arts Center, a 7.5-acre complex directly across the street from City Hall that also comprises the Veterans Building – where the United Nations Charter was signed in June 1945 – and the War Memorial Opera House.

The architects, Pietro Belluschi in collaboration with the firm Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, sought to harmonise the new concert hall's exterior with the grand Beaux Arts style of its longstanding companion buildings. At the same time, they lightened and modernised the structure with a curved facade of glass. Balconies leaning out from either side whimsically suggest a pair of ears. A four-metre-long polished bronze sculpture by Henry Moore presides over the small landscaped piazza at the Van Ness Avenue intersection, one of three major outdoor sculptures surrounding the building. The interior promenade lobby that follows the curvature offers spectacular views of City Hall. Yet another Beaux Arts element is intermingled, in the form of a grand staircase uninterrupted by a centre handrail.

The namesake behind Davies Hall, which is owned and operated by the City of San Francisco, was a Symphony board member and philanthropist who donated \$4m of the \$27.5m price tag to build the new venue. Once opened, it liberated the Symphony (founded in 1911) to pursue ambitions held in check when the musicians shared the War Memorial Opera House with San Francisco Opera and the Ballet. The orchestra was able to expand to a full annual season and now offers more than 236 concerts each year.

Yet the hall's enormous size (approximately one million cubic feet of volume) bedevilled its acoustics, making it difficult even for the musicians to hear each other properly. Davies



Hall finally settled into its identity following an elaborate acoustical renovation (\$10.25m) that was carried out between 1990 and 1992 – without interrupting the concert season – by Larry Kirkegaard with assistance from Lothar Cremer, famous for his work on the Berlin Philharmonie. This process entailed architectural renovations of the concert hall to reduce the volume by five per cent. More than 300 seats were taken out and open aisles were introduced, lowering the original capacity to its present total of 2743. The new system of curved Plexiglas panels suspended above the stage along with fabric banners around the auditorium can be digitally adjusted to suit varying repertoire or rehearsal conditions.

In the decades since Davies Hall opened, the San Francisco Symphony has earned its stature as a leading international orchestra and launched a multiple-Grammy Award-winning in-house label. It is here that breakthrough works of contemporary orchestral repertoire by John Adams were first performed. Meanwhile, a new generation of composers has been given an additional platform in SF SoundBox – a rehearsal space at the other end of the building that is converted into a nightclub atmosphere several times a season to host specially curated programmes of contemporary music.

Thomas May

CHOIR & ORGAN 2020 CALENDAR



Choir & Organ's 2020 calendar showcases beautiful organs from across the globe, celebrating the craftsmanship and imagination that organ builders bring to the instruments they create.

Save 20% with discount code COCAL20



A LETTER FROM *Washington*

Patrick Rucker reports on recent musical events amid political turbulence in the country's capital



The concert season in the District of Columbia roughly coincides with the convening of the Supreme Court, the first Monday of October. Since its founding 229 years ago, Washington has remained, for better or worse, essentially a one-company town. The extravagantly fractious and confrontational political atmosphere of recent months could well have relegated art to the back seat in the greater scheme of things. On the contrary, it seems that the more overheated the political climate, the more voracious audiences here become for the distraction, solace and sustenance of music.

The physical topography of Washington's cultural landscape was appreciably expanded in September with the opening of an annex to the Kennedy Center. The Reach, as the \$250m addition is called, creates 72,000 square feet of space just south of the original 1971 Edward Durrell Stone building, on the banks of the Potomac. Architect Steven Holl created 10 multi-use rooms, a central atrium and an open plaza with video wall, in addition to vehicular access and egress. Much of the interior space is subterranean, with landscaping above by Hollander Design Landscape Architects. The Reach, which will host non-traditional programming, educational initiatives and rehearsal space, opened with a multi-genre festival unfolding over 16 days.

Washington Performing Arts, the region's foremost presenter, brought the Chicago-based Spektral Quartet to the Kennedy Center in October for the premiere of the Icelandic composer Anna Thorvaldsdottir's *Enigma*. Spektral's atmospheric programme included works by Eliza Brown, also of Chicago, a transcription of Tomás Luis de Victoria and Beethoven's Op 135.

The Phillips Collection, which has maintained a distinguished series of concerts since 1941, began its Beethoven 250th celebrations in November with the first of a trio of concerts by Jonathan Biss devoted to the piano sonatas. Unfortunately Biss was visibly ill, but if details of the performance suffered as a result, the overall contours of his singular vision were imparted with characteristic clarity and conviction.

The National Symphony Orchestra continues to show all the signs of an ensemble with renewed purpose and fresh vitality. Gianandrea Noseda led the orchestra at the season opening gala, which presented two small Stravinsky pieces, Bernstein's

Divertimento, Gershwin's *An American in Paris* and two Shostakovich pieces: the *Suite for Jazz Orchestra* No 2 and the Second Piano Concerto. The inimitable Yuja Wang was soloist, holding the audience riveted, and she would have stolen the show had not the orchestra itself sounded so wonderful. It was an auspicious launch to a varied season that, in the spring, will present the Beethoven symphony cycle for the first time in Washington since 1994.

As late as mid-September it was not at all certain that the Baltimore Symphony would have a season, due to a longstanding budget crisis, cancelled summer season and stalled contract negotiations. At the 11th hour, however, the musicians agreed to an extension of their previous contract. Relief was palpable as

Marin Alsop conducted the orchestra in their opening concerts at their home base, the Joseph Meyerhoff Symphony Hall in Baltimore, and at the Strathmore Performing Arts Center in Bethesda. Daniel Bernard

Roumain was soloist in his own Violin Concerto, part of a programme that also included a piece by the Pulitzer Prize-winning Baltimore composer Christopher Rouse, who passed away in September, an overture of Verdi and Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony.

The 2019-20 season at Washington National Opera opened with Verdi's *Otello* in a production originally created as a co-production with English National Opera, Royal Swedish Opera and the Teatro Real, Madrid. Leah Crocetto sang Desdemona and George Gagnidze was a menacing Iago. But the evening belonged to Russell Thomas, who distinguished himself, both vocally and dramatically, in the title-role. Daniele Callegari conducted. In Washington, even when politics is on hold, it's never far away. As the audience settled down, awaiting the appearance of the conductor, suddenly doors at the right of the Kennedy Center Opera House opened and a tiny figure, swathed in a silver lamé shawl as though not to be recognised, entered with some friends and made her way down to the fourth row. The attempt at a concealed identity didn't work and she was recognised immediately. As Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, the 86-year-old eminence of the Supreme Court's left wing, entered the hall, 2300 people leapt to their feet applauding and cheering until she reached her seat. Then the opera began. **G**

The inimitable Yuja Wang was soloist, holding the audience riveted, and she would have stolen the show had not the orchestra itself sounded so wonderful

A Z R I E L I
M U S I C
P R I Z E S
2 0 2 0

**CONGRATULATION TO
OUR 2020 LAUREATES!**

YOTAM HABER
AZRIELI COMMISSION
FOR JEWISH MUSIC

YITZHAK YEDID
AZRIELI PRIZE
FOR JEWISH MUSIC

KEIKO DEVAUX
AZRIELI COMMISSION
FOR CANADIAN MUSIC

EACH WINS OVER
\$200,000 IN PRIZES

**WORLD PREMIERE
GALA CONCERT**

OCTOBER 22, 2020, MONTREAL
LE NOUVEL ENSEMBLE MODERNE

LORRAINE VAILLANCOURT
CONDUCTOR

www.azrielifoundation.org/music



The humanity behind the music-making

Of all composer anniversary celebrations, Beethoven, on the surface, might be felt one of the least necessary. What new advocacy does some of the most famous music ever created need? So sniff some. The cover we've commissioned probably offers a hint that I don't share that view. The greater the art, the greater the joy to be found in exploring, and re-exploring it throughout life. If it continues to inspire the most profound artists to heights and depths of insight and introspection, then it can, and should, do likewise for us too. So how to respond to Beethoven year? Might you make a personal pledge? To perhaps listen anew to the far-from-easy-listening late quartets? To compare sonatas from two pianists united by a score but separated by a century of recording technology and personal experience? Or perhaps I could ask you to harness Beethoven's fame to encourage someone to try classical music who may never have done so before (safe in the knowledge that *Gramophone* readers will direct them to some remarkable recordings)?

While I would usually continue my introduction to a new year in such upbeat tone, over the course of writing this issue the music world lost two people who, in their different fields, were central to many people's musical lives, and about whom I'd like to reflect. What struck me about the tributes to both Mariss Jansons and Sir Stephen Cleobury were how they conveyed the loss of conductors of both extraordinary musicianship, but also humility and humanity.

As Michael McManus put it in *Gramophone's* final interview with Jansons, the conductor had played



a key role in 'ushering out the demagogues and taskmasters of yore, replacing them with a democratic, even republican, spirit on the podium'. Cleobury, meanwhile, who died just two months after retiring as Music Director of King's College, Cambridge, felt even more so the antithesis of that description of conductors of the past. Of course the nature of a choirmaster is to be standing not in front of thousands, but in between two ranks of choristers, before an audience who aren't even facing in your direction, and aren't *actually* an audience at all but fellow worshippers. For all the fame of King's, its primary purpose is to sing the liturgy – beautifully, profoundly, but attracting neither attention nor even applause – a task which, for 37 years, it fulfilled daily under Cleobury.

But to return to Jansons, I rather think something similar is true of the finest orchestral conductors too (aside from the absence of applause). Star maestros may be box-office draws, but music isn't a spectator sport; our heroes are those who enable music to speak to us most directly. The hushed intensity that can follow a Mahler symphony, say, is also a communal experience, in which all of us – maestro, musicians, members of the audience – are enriched by, and humbled before, the music.

Cleobury and Jansons both seemed to be embodiments of the artist who truly places the music before themselves. That, of course, is usually – even necessarily – the case with all great musicians. But how important it is to pay tribute to men such as these who have served as devoted beacons of this belief.

martin.cullingford@markallengroup.com

THIS MONTH'S CONTRIBUTORS



'However long one has been engaged with a subject, however knee-deep one is in annotations and files,' writes

RICHARD OSBORNE, author of our cover story, 'a piece such as a study of Beethoven and the gramophone eventually makes its own weather. It was interesting to discover what I fondly thought I already knew.'



'ASMF Music Director Joshua Bell's relationship with his orchestra began back in his teens with a high-pressure

recording session,' says **CHARLOTTE GARDNER**, who interviews him this issue. 'Yet he also remembers their support, as he told me while we discussed the ensemble's 60th anniversary.'



'Everyone in the world must have heard of Sheku Kanneh-Mason,' says **RICHARD BRATBY**, who interviews the

cellist for our feature, 'but actually meeting him challenged my assumptions. It was a chance to get to know a really thoughtful and engaging young artist, with a fascinating hinterland'.

Gramophone, which has been serving the classical music world since 1923, is first and foremost a monthly review magazine, delivered today in both print and digital formats. It boasts an eminent and knowledgeable panel of experts, which reviews the full range of classical music recordings. Its reviews are completely independent. In addition to reviews, its interviews and features help readers to explore in greater depth the recordings that the magazine covers, as well as offer insight into the work of composers and performers. It is *the* magazine for the classical record collector, as well as for the enthusiast starting a voyage of discovery.

THE REVIEWERS Andrew Achenbach • Nalen Anthoni • Tim Ashley • Mike Ashman • Michelle Assay
Richard Bratby • Edward Breen • Liam Cagney • Alexandra Coghlan • Rob Cowan (consultant reviewer)
Jeremy Dibble • Peter Dickinson • Jed Distler • Adrian Edwards • Richard Fairman • David Fallows
David Fanning • Andrew Farach-Colton • Iain Fenlon • Neil Fisher • Fabrice Fitch • Jonathan Freeman-Attwood
Charlotte Gardner • David Gutman • Christian Hoskins • Lindsay Kemp • Philip Kennicott • Richard Lawrence
Andrew Mellor • Ivan Moody • Bryce Morrison • Hannah Nepilova • Jeremy Nicholas • Christopher Nickol
Geoffrey Norris • Richard Osborne • Stephen Plaistow • Mark Pullinger • Peter Quantrill • Guy Rickards
Malcolm Riley • Marc Rochester • Patrick Rucker • Edward Seckerson • Mark Seow • Hugo Shirley • Pwyll ap Siôn
Harriet Smith • David Patrick Stearns • David Threasher • David Vickers • John Warrack • Richard Whitehouse
Arnold Whittall • Richard Wigmore • William Yeoman

CONTENTS

Volume 97 Number 1183

EDITORIAL

Phone 020 7738 5454 **Fax** 020 7733 2325
email gramophone@markallengroup.com
EDITOR AND PUBLISHER Martin Cullingford
DEPUTY EDITOR Sarah Kirkup / 020 7501 6365
REVIEWS EDITOR Tim Parry / 020 7501 6367
ONLINE CONTENT EDITOR James McCarthy
SUB-EDITOR David Threasher / 020 7501 6370
SUB-EDITOR Marija Đurić Speare
ART DIRECTOR Dinah Lone / 020 7501 6689
PICTURE EDITOR Sunita Sharma-Gibson
AUDIO EDITOR Andrew Everard
EDITORIAL ADMINISTRATOR Libby McPhee
THANKS TO Hannah Nepilova and Charlotte Gardner
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF James Jolly

ADVERTISING

Phone 020 7738 5454 **Fax** 020 7733 2325
email gramophone.ads@markallengroup.com
COMMERCIAL MANAGER
Esther Zuke / 020 7501 6368
SALES EXECUTIVE
Samuel Desborough / 020 7501 6373

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND BACK ISSUES

0800 137201 **(UK)** +44 (0)1722 716997 **(overseas)**
subscriptions@markallengroup.com

PUBLISHING

Phone 020 7738 5454
HEAD OF MARKETING AND DIGITAL STRATEGY Luca Da Rè / 020 7501 6362
MARKETING MANAGER
John Barnett / 020 7501 6233
MARKETING EXECUTIVE
Hayley Sigrist / 020 7738 6459
GROUP INSTITUTIONAL SALES MANAGER Jas Atwal
PRODUCTION DIRECTOR
Richard Hamshere / 01722 716997
PRODUCTION MANAGER Kyri Apostolou
CIRCULATION DIRECTOR
Sally Boettcher / 01722 716997
SUBSCRIPTIONS MANAGER
Bethany Foy / 01722 716997
EDITORIAL DIRECTOR Martin Cullingford
MANAGING DIRECTOR Paul Geoghegan
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER Ben Allen
CHAIRMAN Mark Allen



A MARK ALLEN GROUP COMPANY

www.markallengroup.com

GRAMOPHONE is published by
MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd, St Jude's Church,
Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, United Kingdom.
gramophone.co.uk
email gramophone@markallengroup.com or
subscriptions@markallengroup.com
ISSN 0017-310X.

The January 2020 issue of *Gramophone* is on sale from January 2; the February issue will be on sale from January 29 (both UK). Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of statements in this magazine but we cannot accept responsibility for errors or omissions, or for matters arising from clerical or printers' errors, or an advertiser not completing his contract. Regarding concert listings, all information is correct at the time of going to press. Letters to the editor requiring a personal reply should be accompanied by a stamped addressed envelope. We have made every effort to secure permission to use copyright material. Where material has been used inadvertently or we have been unable to trace the copyright owner, acknowledgement will be made in a future issue.

UK subscription rate £70.
Printed in England by Southernprint.

North American edition (ISSN 0017-310X):
Gramophone, USPS 881080, is published monthly with an additional issue in October by MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB, United Kingdom. The US annual subscription price is \$89. Airfreight and mailing in the USA by agent named WN Shipping USA, 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Periodicals postage paid at Jamaica NY 11431. US Postmaster: Send address changes to *Gramophone*, WN Shipping USA, 156-15, 146th Avenue, 2nd Floor, Jamaica, NY 11434, USA. Subscription records are maintained at MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd, Unit A, Buildings 1-5 Dinton Business Park, Catherine Ford Road, Dinton, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP3 5HZ, UK. Air Business Ltd is acting as our mailing agent.

© MA Music Leisure & Travel Ltd, 2020. All rights reserved. No part of the *Gramophone* may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without prior written permission of the Publishing Director. Please read our privacy policy, by visiting privacypolicy.markallengroup.com. This will explain how we process, use & safeguard your data.

The views expressed do not necessarily represent those of the editor or *Gramophone*. Advertisements in the journal do not imply endorsement of the products or services advertised.



Reviews

EDITOR'S CHOICE

7

The 12 most highly recommended recordings reviewed in this issue

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

36

Michelle Assay is moved by Stephen Hough's touching accounts of Brahms's final piano pieces, which capture the music's intimacy and unique autumnal quality

ORCHESTRAL

38

Kati Debretzini plays Bach violin concertos; Rattle's Bruckner Sixth with the LSO; Debussy from the Hallé; a trio of Haydn symphony discs; Emelyanychev's Schubert Symphony No 9

CHAMBER

54

The Atos Trio plays Beethoven; Gautier Capuçon and Yuja Wang team up in Chopin and Franck; Shostakovich from the Fitzwilliam Quartet

INSTRUMENTAL

64

Freddy Kempf's latest Prokofiev; Conrad Tao's 'American Rage'; encores from Nelson Freire

VOCAL

74

Lawrence Zazzo sings Handel; Kenneth Leighton from Edinburgh; Blue Heron's Ockeghem

OPERA

86

A pair of Gluck *Orphée et Eurydice* DVDs; varied Vivaldi from Thomas Dunford's ensemble Jupiter

JAZZ & WORLD MUSIC

93

Reviews from our sister titles *Jazzwise* and *Songlines*

REISSUES

94

Zubin Mehta; Raymond Lewenthal; LPs

BOX-SET ROUND-UP

100

REPLAY

102

Rudolf Firkušný, Paul Badura-Skoda and others

CLASSICS RECONSIDERED

104

Mark Pullinger and Tim Ashley compare notes on Pierre Monteux's Ravel *Daphnis et Chloé*

BOOKS

106

Essays on Brahms; a biography of Alma Mahler

GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

108

Beethoven's *Hammerklavier* Sonata: Jed Distler sifts through a mountain of contenders

REVIEWS INDEX

128



Features

FOR THE RECORD

8

All the latest classical music news – and more

BEETHOVEN ON RECORD

14

Richard Osborne explores the pivotal and rich relationship between Beethoven's music and the art of recording across the past century

BEETHOVEN LIVE

23

A guide to some of the best events and projects worldwide celebrating Beethoven's anniversary

SHEKU KANNEH-MASON

26

The young cellist has already earned international fame; as he releases his new Elgar album, he talks about the recording artists who have inspired him

JOSHUA BELL

30

The Music Director of the Academy of St Martin in the Fields on the 60-year-old ensemble he's proud to call his second family

MUSICIAN AND THE SCORE

52

Vasily Petrenko discusses Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote* with Andrew Farach-Colton

ICONS

62

Hans Swarowsky is the focus this month; Peter Quantrill champions the Austrian maestro

CONTEMPORARY COMPOSER

72

The ever-evolving music of the Irish composer Donnacha Dennehy is explored by Liam Cagney

WHAT NEXT?

84

Debussy's *La mer* is the embarking point for a voyage of discovery through some maritime music

PERFORMANCES AND EVENTS

114

Experience the best concerts, in person and online

HIGH FIDELITY

117

LETTERS AND OBITUARIES

124

NEW RELEASES

126

MY BEETHOVEN

130

Launching a new year-long series, actor Simon Callow reflects on what Beethoven means to him

CHANDOS
THE SOUND OF CLASSICAL

JANUARY RELEASES



RECORDING OF THE MONTH LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN THE LATE QUARTETS

Brodsky Quartet

The late quartets of Beethoven are renowned as the pinnacle of his output, and stand among the greatest compositions of all time. The Brodsky Quartet's keenly anticipated recording celebrates the Beethoven year. 3 discs for the price of 2

CHAN 20114(3)



LINES WRITTEN DURING A SLEEPLESS NIGHT – THE RUSSIAN CONNECTION

Louise Alder | Joseph Middleton

On her debut album for Chandos, Louise Alder performs a very personal programme of songs musically and linguistically interconnected and reflecting her family's history.

CHAN 20153

SURROUND-SOUND HYBRID SACD

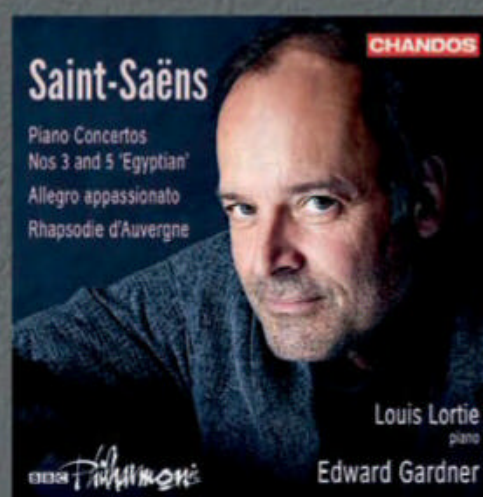


SIR EUGENE GOOSSENS ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOLUME 3

**Tasmin Little
Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
Sir Andrew Davis**

Sir Andrew Davis and his Melbourne forces turn to Goossens's Second Symphony and the Phantasy Concerto.

CHSA 5193



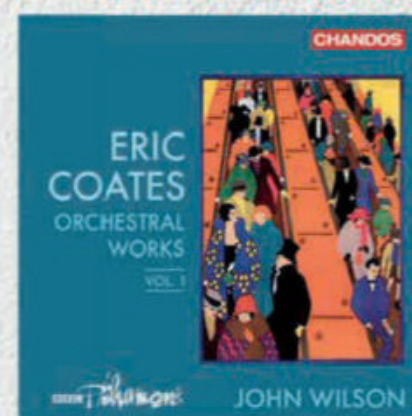
CAMILLE SAINT-SAËNS PIANO CONCERTOS NOS 3 AND 5 ETC.

**Louis Lortie | BBC Philharmonic
Edward Gardner**

Louis Lortie completes his survey of the piano concertos of Saint-Saëns with Nos 3 and 5 (*the Egyptian*), adding the *Rhapsodie d'Auvergne* and *Allegro appassionato* for good measure.

CHAN 20038

In Case You Missed It!



ERIC COATES ORCHESTRAL WORKS, VOLUME 1

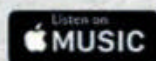
**BBC Philharmonic
John Wilson**

'Wilson is relishing every second of the music ... every detail, dynamic and subtlety captured perfectly'

***** Classical Source

CHAN 20036

WWW.CHANDOS.NET
[MP3 • LOSSLESS • STUDIO • SURROUND]
[SACD • CD • USB]



PRESTO
CLASSICAL

EUROPADISC

STAY IN THE KNOW
Twitter Facebook Instagram YouTube

CELEBRATE BEETHOVEN



Explore the many colours of Ludwig van Beethoven in 2020

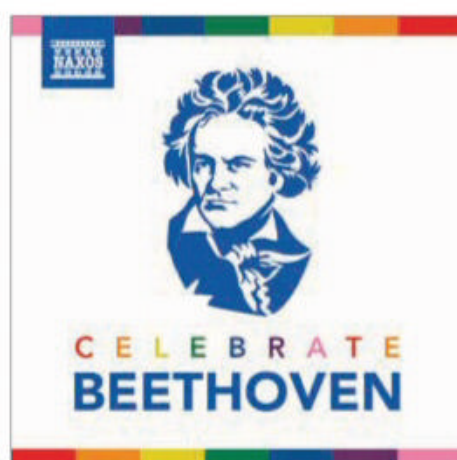
THE COMPLETE EDITION

Beethoven's monumental contribution to Western classical music is celebrated here in this definitive collection marking the 250th anniversary of his birth.

- Surveying the totality of his career and achievement, the Complete Edition spans orchestral, concerto, keyboard, chamber, music for the stage, choral and vocal works, encompassing his most familiar and iconic masterpieces, alongside rarities and recently reconstructed fragments and sketches in world premiere recordings.
- Musical director of the Unheard Beethoven project Willem Holsbergen and producer Mark S. Zimmer, have given many forgotten pieces a new lease of life through new reconstructions.
- The roster of artists and ensembles includes some of Beethoven's greatest contemporary exponents, in performances that have won widespread critical acclaim worldwide.
- Featured artists include Takako Nishizaki, Maria Kliegel, Boris Giltburg, Jenö Jandó, Herbert Blomstedt, Kodály Quartet.
- Over 100 hours of music
- Over 1,550 tracks
- 136-page booklet



8.500250 [90 discs]



CELEBRATE BEETHOVEN PLAYLIST

Follow the 'Celebrate Beethoven' playlist as we celebrate Beethoven's 250th birthday with fresh updates each month throughout 2020.



NEW DIGITAL ALBUMS

Follow the 13 new digital albums, themed by segments in the Complete Edition and released on the first Friday of each month, beginning on 6 December 2019.

To find out more, visit WWW.NAXOS.COM/BEETHOVEN250

CELEBRATE BEETHOVEN YEAR WITH NAXOS



SCAN ME

GRAMOPHONE *Editor's choice*

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings from this month's reviews



RECORDING OF THE MONTH



BRAHMS

'The Final Piano Pieces'
Stephen Hough *pf*
Hyperion
► **MICHELLE ASSAY'S REVIEW IS ON PAGE 36**

A beautiful recital from Stephen Hough, one of today's leading musicians, of late piano works by Brahms, rich in colours both vivid and delicate, and thoughtful and reflective throughout.



CPE BACH

Oboe Concertos
Xenia Löffler *ob*
Akademie für Alte Musik
Berlin / Georg Kallweit
Harmonia Mundi

CPE Bach's orchestral imagination and flair are given full voice here in the symphonies, while Xenia Löffler is exquisite in the oboe concertos.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 38**



BRAHMS

Piano Concerto No 1
Lars Vogt *pf* Royal
Northern Sinfonia
Ondine
Leading his Royal

Northern Sinfonia from the piano, Lars Vogt offers a bold and brilliant D minor Concerto, paired with finely detailed solo Brahms.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 41**

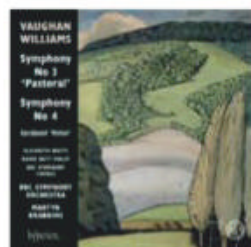


R STRAUSS

Don Juan. Don Quixote.
Till Eulenspiegel
Oslo Philharmonic
Orchestra /
Vasily Petrenko

Excellent storytelling from Vasily Petrenko, with Oslo's Principal cellist Louisa Tuck earning equal honours as the Knight.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 47**

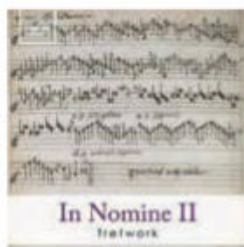


VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

Symphonies Nos 3 & 4
BBC Symphony
Orchestra /
Martyn Brabbins
Hyperion

Martyn Brabbins's instinctive sense of the sweep, grace and drama of Vaughan Williams's orchestral sound-world results here in a very fine release.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 48**



'IN NOMINE II'

Fretwork
Signum
Album after album
from viol consort
Fretwork affirm

their status as an ensemble of supreme musicianship, whether immersed in the past or playing music of modernity by the likes of Nico Muhly and Gavin Bryars.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 61**

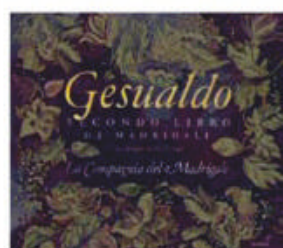


JS BACH 'Opus Bach -

Organ Works, Vol 1'
Peter Kofler *org*
Farao
A major project by
Peter Kofler to record

all JS Bach's organ works begins in style, complete with recorded sound which our critic Marc Rochester describes as 'genuinely awe-inspiring'.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 64**

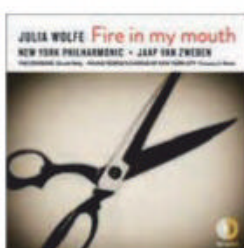


GESUALDO

Madrigals, Book 2
La Compagnia
del Madrigale
Glossa
That Gesualdo

madrigals grace these pages two months in a row is testimony both to the music but also to the way different vocal groups can excel in different ways in this repertoire.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 75**



WOLFE

Fire in my Mouth
New York
Philharmonic Orchestra /
Jaap van Zweden
Decca Gold

A modern work from composer Julia Wolfe about a century-old tragedy, but one whose theme – the treatment of the poorer members of society – resonates today.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



LULLY Isis

Les Talens Lyriques /
Christophe Rousset
Aparté
Christophe Rousset
once again strikes

gold with a major Lully project of elegance and drama, his understanding of the atmosphere and rhythms of the French Baroque as instinctive as ever.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 88**



DVD/BLU-RAY

GOMES Lo schiavo
Sols; Teatro Lirico, Cagliari / John Neschling
Dynamic

Where DVD can excel: offering advocacy to a work rarely performed on stage, and making a good case for its revival in opera houses more widely.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 87**



REISSUE/ARCHIVE

VARIOUS COMPOSERS

Piano Works
Raymond Lewenthal *pf*
Sony Classical

A label's legacy from 'a keyboard titan of the old school', as reviewer Jeremy Nicholas puts it in praise of this set of recordings by American pianist Raymond Lewenthal.

► **REVIEW ON PAGE 96**

FOR THE RECORD

New soprano signing at Pentatone

Soprano Hanna-Elisabeth Müller has joined the Pentatone label on an exclusive, multi-album deal. The relationship with *Gramophone's* current Label of the Year will begin with a recital of German and French song, focusing on works by Schumann, Zemlinsky and Poulenc, and performed with pianist Juliane Ruf. Released in February, the album is entitled 'Reine de coeur'.

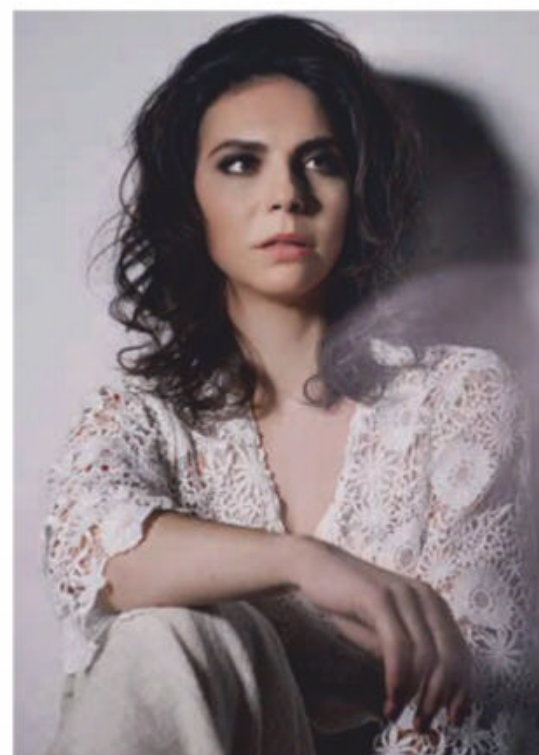
'It has been extraordinary to follow her career,' said Renaud Loranger, Vice President A&R at Pentatone, 'from an early yet revelatory Zdenka in Salzburg, to her repeated triumphs on the most prestigious stages in Mozart and Strauss, where her exquisite, emerald-like soprano shines like few others. We look forward to documenting her exceptional artistry.'

That Zdenka, in Richard Strauss's *Arabella*, had come in 2014, alongside Renée Fleming and Thomas Hampson, with Christian Thielemann conducting. Her Met and La Scala debuts came in 2017, and Müller returns to the Met in early 2020 as Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*, followed by performances as Marzelline in *Fidelio* with the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra at the Baden-Baden Easter Festival and the Berlin Philharmonie, and her role debut as Eva in Wagner's *Meistersinger* at the Bavarian State Opera under Kirill Petrenko. This season also includes

concerts with WDR Symphony Orchestra Cologne (Strauss's *Four Last Songs*) and NHK Symphony Orchestra (Mahler's Second Symphony), both with Christoph Eschenbach.

She is no stranger to *Gramophone's* pages: of her Sophie in *Der Rosenkavalier*, conducted by Marc Albrecht and released on Challenge Classics (4/18), Mike Ashman

wrote that she 'floats the high notes that Strauss indulgently but mercilessly gave her in Act 2 with almost insolent ease', while three months earlier she received praise for her performance in Adam Fischer's Editor's Choice-winning recording of Mahler Symphony No 4, on AVI-Music.



Hanna-Elisabeth Müller: joining Pentatone

Richter's Decca deal

Composer Max Richter will continue his relationship with Universal Music Group, having signed a new deal which will see future works released though Decca Records Group under the imprint 'Studio Richter'.



The announcement comes as his music has also hit the 1 billion streams mark. Richter's work explores the ground where classical and neo-classical music meet – or as Clemens Trautmann, Deutsche Grammophon President puts it 'new, artistically credible repertoire ... that draws inspiration from the classical and avant-garde music tradition as well as from electronica, minimal and ambient music.' One such DG project, *Vivaldi Recomposed*, featuring violinist Daniel Hope, topped the classical charts in 22 countries, while Richter's other projects have included film soundtracks (most recently the sci-fi movie *Ad Astra*) and a collaboration with the Royal Ballet. Commentating on the deal, Rebecca Allen, President of Decca Records Group, says: 'Like Max, we have always strived to break down genre boundaries, and with this exciting new partnership, we feel empowered and ambitious to bring new audiences into the ongoing Richter journey.'

San Francisco Opera's new MD

The conductor Eun Sun Kim has been named the new Music Director of San Francisco Opera, starting from August 1, 2021, conducting up to four productions each season of an initial five-year contract. The South Korea-born 39-year-old – a one-time assistant of Kirill Petrenko at Opéra National de Lyon and whose other posts include Principal Guest conductor of Houston Grand Opera – will open the 2020-21 season meanwhile with Beethoven's *Fidelio*.

RPS honours musical game-changers

Winners at this year's RPS Awards included Chineke! – Britain's first majority Black and Minority Ethnic orchestra – and the Bournemouth Symphony for 'Change Makers and Resound', which included the establishment of the first professional disabled-led ensemble. The prestigious RPS Gold Medal was given to Sofia Gubaidulina, the first female composer to receive the honour.

BBC Concert Orchestra's new guest

The BBC Concert Orchestra – admired for its versatility and virtuosity across a wide breath of repertoire – has named Finnish conductor Anna-Maria Helsing as its new Principal Guest Conductor, where she will be involved in further building its relationship with contemporary composers, including the current Composer-in-Residence, Dobrinka Tabakova, as well as developing family concerts at the Southbank.

Frankfurt post for Alain Altinoglu

Alain Altinoglu has been appointed Music Director of the Frankfurt Radio Symphony, from the 2021-22 season, for an initial term of three years, succeeding Andrés Orozco-Estrada, who has held the post since 2014. A regular conductor of leading orchestras in Europe and America, he was appointed Music Director of Brussels's opera house La Monnaie in 2016, a post he has also just extended until 2025.

Top Estonian post for Olari Elts

The Estonian National Symphony Orchestra has named Olari Elts as its next Music Director and Chief Conductor, from the 2020-21 season. He succeeds Neeme Järvi, who brought the orchestra to the 2018 *Gramophone* Awards to mark receiving our Lifetime Achievement Award, and who will take on the title Honorary Conductor For Life.

Elts, 48, is already well-known to ENSO audiences; his first concert with the ensemble was in 1998, and he has been Principal Guest Conductor since 2007. Speaking about the appointment, which is for an initial three seasons, Elts described ENSO as 'my "home orchestra"... as its Principal Guest Conductor in the last 12 years, I have been inspired by the passionate music-making of our orchestra and I am thrilled and honoured to be taking our collaboration to another level! In these turbulent times, classical music is our universal lighthouse and we need it more than ever. I look forward to the new adventure with this wonderful orchestra with all the exciting projects ahead.'



The conductor is a particular champion of contemporary repertoire, especially that of Estonia, and recordings with the orchestra include an album for ECM of the music of Helena Tulve (5/14). Last year he released an album of Heino Eller on Ondine ('thrills come thick and fast in this rewarding score and the hard-edged but soulful sound of Elts's ENSO underlines them all,' wrote Andrew Mellor), and also conducted the Vienna Symphony Orchestra in violinist Eldbjørg Hemsing's album of Borgström and Shostakovich concertos on BIS.

Elts's previous posts include, from 2001 to 2006, Chief Conductor of the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, and Principal Guest Conductor of the Scottish Chamber Orchestra (2007-10) and of the Helsinki Philharmonic Orchestra (2011-14).

ONE TO WATCH

Timothy Ridout Viola

The viola player Timothy Ridout is not entirely new to *Gramophone's* pages; his debut disc on Champs Hill Records, of works for viola and piano by Vieuxtemps, was warmly welcomed in June 2017. By then he had already become the first British winner of the Lionel Tertis International Viola Competition, and his career has since taken on a terrific momentum. Still only 24, he is now on the BBC New Generation Artists Scheme for 2019-21. He has recorded his first orchestral disc, of works by Martinů, Britten, Vaughan Williams and Hindemith with the Orchestre de Chambre de Lausanne, which will be issued by Claves in the spring. And then, later in the year, he will record transcriptions of Schumann (*Dichterliebe*) and Prokofiev (Six pieces from *Romeo and Juliet*) for Harmonia Mundi, as part of their Harmonia Nova series, with the German pianist Frank Dupree. Both albums will be well worth looking out for.

If one were to single out a quality that makes Ridout's playing special, it would be his extraordinary sound. He plays on a wonderful instrument by Peregrino di Zanello, from



c1565-75, and draws from it the most gorgeous tone: ravishingly beautiful, warm and powerful, with a clarity you more commonly hear from violinists. Of course, it takes a very fine technique to hone this sound, and an instinctive musical understanding to bring shape and character to the wide range of repertoire that Ridout champions. Here is a viola player of rare calibre, one to follow in the footsteps of Lawrence Power - indeed, perhaps a York Bowen recording might follow. We can hope.

GRAMOPHONE *Online*

The magazine is just the beginning. Visit gramophone.co.uk for ...

Podcasts

Gramophone's podcast series continues, featuring interviews with Maxim Emelyanychev, who talks to James Jolly about his new role with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, his very wide-ranging musical sympathies and his approach to Schubert's last symphony, recently recorded with Linn Records. Editor Martin Cullingford meets the pianist Norma Fisher to talk about her life



Norma Fisher features on the Gramophone Podcast

and career, about the condition that forced her to give up public performance in the 1980s, about her teaching work, and about the fascinating recordings that have been emerging from the BBC archives in recent months (see the November issue's Editor's Choice selection).

Blogs

Kati Debretzeni reflects on her new recording of Bach's violin concertos with the English Baroque Soloists and Sir John Eliot Gardiner

Facebook, Instagram & Twitter

Follow us to hear about the latest classical music news and anniversaries.

OBITUARIES

Late last year saw the loss of two great conductors from the orchestral and choral worlds, Mariss Jansons and Stephen Cleobury

MARISS JANSONS

*Born January 14, 1943
Died November 30, 2019*

The Latvian conductor Mariss Jansons has died at home in St Petersburg at the age of 76. He was the Chief Conductor of the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, a post he'd held since 2003 and for over a decade alongside being Chief Conductor of Amsterdam's Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra (2004-15).

Born in Riga, Jansons's father was the conductor Arvīds Jansons. He studied in St Petersburg, working as Yevgeny Mravinsky's assistant at the Leningrad Philharmonic. He entered the city's Conservatory and studied the piano alongside conducting. He also worked in Vienna with Hans Swarowsky and in Salzburg with Herbert von Karajan, in whose conducting competition he took second place in 1971. (Karajan wanted Jansons to become his assistant in Berlin but the Soviet authorities ensured that Jansons never received the invitation.)

His first major post was as Assistant Conductor of the Leningrad Philharmonic, and his first orchestra the Oslo Philharmonic whose Music Director he became in 1979. He resigned in 2000 in protest at the city's unwillingness to address the problem with acoustics of the Oslo Concert Hall. In 1997 he became Principal Guest Conductor of the London Philharmonic and the same year was named Music Director of the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, a post he held until 2004.

His last two roles were with the Bavarian and Amsterdam orchestras, but he was a regular guest with the world's greatest ensembles, the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonics and the London Symphony Orchestra among them.

Jansons's career coincided with the enormous boom in classical recordings, and he made a large number of CDs for Chandos (his Oslo Philharmonic Tchaikovsky cycle not only established his reputation but also contributed to Chandos's eminence in the classical recording field) and EMI for whom he recorded extensively, embracing the primarily the Russian repertoire. He also recorded for the Royal Concertgebouw's own label (including Bruckner and Mahler symphonies) and from his BRSO era many live recordings were released by BR-Klassik including a very fine Beethoven cycle where each symphony was juxtaposed with a contemporary response. He won a *Gramophone* Award in 2004 for the Grieg and Schumann piano concertos with Leif Ove Andsnes and the Berlin Philharmonic (EMI).

A superb orchestral trainer, Jansons's Bavarian RSO was praised in *Gramophone* by Richard Osborne when reviewing the Beethoven cycle: 'As an ensemble, Jansons's Bavarian orchestra is in a similar league to the prewar BBC SO under Toscanini or the Berlin Philharmonic at the time of Karajan's celebrated 1961-62 cycle. The string playing is of superlative quality, its transparency enhanced by the dispensations favoured by Jansons: antiphonally divided violins, double basses to the left, cellos in front of the podium, violas to the right.' **James Jolly**



MARISS JANSONS: A PERSONAL REMEMBRANCE

Michael McManus, who interviewed the conductor several times, reflects on his life

As I write, it is exactly seven years since I was in Tokyo, with my good friends from the wonderful Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, to attend a glorious full cycle of the Beethoven symphonies in the Suntory Hall. The conductor, of course, was the great and, suddenly and heartbreakingly, late Mariss Jansons. It was without question one of the musical experiences of a lifetime. The sheer love of the audience – the depth of their appreciation – was overwhelming.

It was, for me, a unique privilege. Mariss was the toast of the town. Between concerts and rehearsals I spent precious time with him and learned how profoundly he respected the people and culture of Japan, not least because he shared their fascination with the evolving, modern science of acousticians. Like them, he dreamed of the perfect concert hall; and what a lasting tribute it will be to his memory, if the great German city of Munich really does build a hall that is truly worthy of its past, present and future.

It's said that our mortality defines us; and few live under the shadow of mortality for longer than Mariss Jansons did. Certainly, it made him no less human; almost certainly, it heightened his art in ways the rest of us can never fully comprehend. When the former Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Charles Kennedy, died in 2015, a mutual friend said it was 'shocking but not surprising'. So it was too, when I heard Mariss had succumbed at last to the debilitating heart condition that had dogged him for decades. I knew how ill he was, how ill he had been, how his father had died at a much younger age from a similar condition, but somehow persuaded myself his remarkable spirit would keep him on the podium for a good few years yet.

I first encountered Mariss through his Tchaikovsky interpretations and very much not in person, through his legendary telecasts of the symphonies with the then BBC Welsh Symphony Orchestra and 'those' Chandos recordings

from Oslo. My first experience ‘in the flesh’ was not long in coming, though, a little over 30 years ago, sitting with my parents in the front stalls of an only half-full Barbican. An unremarkable Beethoven Symphony No 2 was followed by a performance of Mahler’s Symphony No 1 that was simply incendiary. I knew at once I should never hear a rendition to match it. An enthralled audience leaped to its feet and demanded more. It was fortunate the orchestra had prepared four encores, the last of which was the Storm from *Peter Grimes* – then an unfamiliar piece to me. On the platform and in the hall, we all knew we had been part of something special that evening.

In the years that followed, Mariss Jansons’s reputation grew and grew and I had the privilege of attending his concerts in Amsterdam and Munich, Tokyo and Berlin, Dublin, London and beyond. He never, ever disappointed. Conducting is often parodied as a calling that imposes a cruel, yet inevitable, bipolar tension between heart and head, technique and inspiration, between classicism and romanticism, Dionysus and Apollo. Mariss made a nonsense of all that. He was meticulous alright, always respectful to the score and scrupulous in ensuring he researched every factor that might be germane to how a piece should be performed, but he never relied on technique alone.

Sometimes he would use a theatrical flourish to generate the last iota of excitement, as witnessed by the sudden *accelerando* he would insert into the coda of Tchaikovsky’s Symphony No 4. Nothing happened by chance, however, or against the spirit of the composer or the piece.

The breadth of his repertoire was astonishing, from the Baroque to contemporary; and he mastered it all. What a sad thought, that he had no principled or musical reservations about the completions of Mahler’s Symphony No 10. He was keen to learn and perform the piece, but simply never had the time. Now it’s too late.

There are few consolations to be had when someone so gentle, kind and talented is lost to us, but Jansons’s legacy is formidable – and tangible too. He willingly acceded to the demands of the recording industry and much of his best work was done with a radio orchestra, so being recorded was second nature to him. I have several personal favourites, but none can come close to the electrifying experience of being in a concert hall with Jansons and 80 or 90 premier musicians. I shall cherish his Haydn and Beethoven, his Tchaikovsky and Bruckner, his Mahler and Stravinsky. I am sure future generations will do so too, but they will never experience what we did.

STEPHEN CLEOBURY

Born December 31, 1948

Died November 22, 2019

Sir Stephen Cleobury, the former Music Director of King’s College Cambridge, has died aged 70 – just two months after his retirement from the post he had held for 37 years.

Few institutions enjoy the prominence and influence in the musical world – let alone in the choral world – of the Choir of King’s College, Cambridge. Familiar worldwide through its annual Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, its fame was already as solid as the iconic vast vaulted chapel in which it daily sings when Cleobury took over in 1982, its distinctive choral sound having been spread internationally under his immediate predecessors Sir David Willcocks and Sir Philip Ledger, whose tenures had coincided with the huge expansion of the recording industry.

But not content with resting on the choir’s hard-earned laurels, Cleobury was to add an impressive recorded legacy of his own across a wide breadth of repertoire, from the early music of Byrd and Purcell through to the key works of the 20th-century Anglican tradition and the composers of our own day – even recording solo recitals on King’s magnificent organ. Many of those contemporary composers had themselves been commissioned by Cleobury as part of one of his most significant innovations at King’s – the annual inclusion of a new work in the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols which, since 1983, had offered an unprecedented showcase for a new piece of contemporary choral music through the service’s immense broadcast audience. To interview Cleobury about such projects was to encounter an unfailingly courteous figure who always seemed delighted and grateful to have the opportunity to be able to share his considered insights about, and act as committed advocate for, the music and the musicians involved.

But while celebrating these high-profile achievements, it’s also important to note two other things: the personal impact his teaching would have had on the musical development of the many hundreds of choristers, choral scholars and organists he taught



over those nearly four decades, and the spiritual impact on all those who attended daily worship at King’s, the singing of which is, first and foremost, the chapel choir’s *raison d’être*.

Aside from the work at King’s for which he was understandably most famous, many will have encountered his music-making through other ensembles with which he was associated, including the BBC Singers (of which he was Chief Conductor from 1995 to 2007) the Cambridge University Musical Society (which he conducted from 1983 to 2009), or Westminster Cathedral where he had been appointed Master of Music in 1979.

Cleobury’s final Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols, last year, had been the event’s 100th – marking a century in which its poignant pattern of liturgy and music has become woven indelibly into the fabric of Christmas celebrations throughout the world. Six months later his lifelong service to music was recognised with a Knighthood. He died in the evening of November 22, the feast day of St Cecilia, Patron Saint of music. **Martin Cullingford**

GRAMOPHONE GUIDE TO ...

Oratorio

Richard Wigmore traces the history of this sacred genre from the 17th century onwards

Put simply, oratorio denotes a (usually) sacred work for soloists, chorus and orchestra intended for concert performance. A genre which reached its zenith in Handel's London began, modestly, in Catholic Rome. From the 1560s hymns of praise (*laude*) were sung during the 'spiritual exercises' of the Congregazione dell'Oratorio, founded by St Philip Neri to keep dissolute youth off the streets. These meetings, held in a prayer hall or 'oratory', rapidly spread to other churches and cities. By the early 17th century their music, based on biblical stories, had become more elaborately operatic, and the term oratorio took root. The earliest famous example, Cavalieri's all-singing, all-dancing spectacular *Rappresentazione di Anima, e di Corpo*, turned Rome's Chiesa Nova into a theatre. More typical are smaller-scale works like Giovanni Francesco Anerio's *La conversione di S Paolo*, unfolding as a series of operatic-style dialogues punctuated by instrumental sinfonias.

By the mid-17th century oratorio performances were a major cultural attraction in Rome. The star composers were Luigi Rossi and, especially, Giacomo Carissimi, whose Latin oratorios combine expressive recitative and arioso with pithy dramatic choruses. His masterpiece *Jephtha*, culminating in a poignant lament for Jephtha's daughter, left its mark on Handel. In an age that increasingly cultivated solo virtuosity, the oratorios of Stradella and Alessandro Scarlatti are effectively sacred operas, founded on the alternation of recitative and often flamboyant arias.

Scarlatti and Stradella were key influences on the young Handel's two Italian oratorios, the allegorical *Il trionfo del tempo e del disinganno*, and the sacred *La Resurrezione*. When Handel settled in England in 1712 there was no oratorio. The century's supreme musical cosmopolitan would put that right. The seeds were sown by the two English masques Handel composed for the Duke of Chandos around 1718: *Esther*, with its roots in Racine, and *Acis and Galatea*, with its Purcellian flavour. Handel later expanded *Esther* as an oratorio for public



Oratorio singing at London's Drury Lane: a sketch by John Nixon (c1760-1818) dating from 1814

performance in London, setting the precedent for a succession of masterpieces designed both to entertain and to edify during Lent.

The 19th century's two favourite Handel oratorios, *Messiah* and the epic *Israel in Egypt*, are atypical in their virtual lack of narrative drama. In his other oratorios, from *Saul* to *Jephtha*, he forged an inspired synthesis of Italian *opera seria* and English anthem that also drew on Restoration masque, German Passion and Greek tragedy. Although the oratorios were never staged in Handel's lifetime, modern productions have proved that they can be more excitingly dramatic than his operas.

In Germany a popular style of oratorio was the so-called Passion Oratorio, exemplified by the many works (including a fine one by Handel) based on Brockes' gory *Der für die Sünden der Welt gemarterte und sterbende Jesus*. Like the related genres of cantata and *opera seria*, oratorio was in decline by the end of the 18th century. All the examples from this point onwards are to some degree retrospective. With *The Creation*, librettist Baron van Swieten anointed Haydn as Handel's successor in the evocation of the musical

'sublime'. Its follow-up, *The Seasons*, combines Handelian choral grandeur with a charming vein of pastoralism that recalls Handel's Miltonic ode *L'Allegro*.

In 19th-century Germany and Britain the Handelian oratorio tradition was sustained by choral societies and festivals, often with a cast of hundreds. Spohr vainly attempted to scale the sublime in works like *Die letzten Dinge* (The Last Judgement). Far more enduring are Mendelssohn's *St Paul* – more Bachian than Handelian – and the theatrically conceived *Elijah*.

After Mendelssohn the genre is represented by isolated masterpieces, from Berlioz's consciously archaic *L'enfance du Christ*, through Elgar's *The Dream of Gerontius*, to Stravinsky's Latin opera-oratorio *Oedipus rex*. If *The Dream of Gerontius* is in essence a neo-Wagnerian symphonic poem with voices, the two most successful English oratorios post-Elgar recreate something of Handel's spirit in a modern idiom: Walton's riproaring *Belshazzar's Feast*, and Tippett's *A Child of our Time*, whose interpolated spirituals are a secular equivalent of Bach's Lutheran chorales. ⑥

ARTISTS & *their* INSTRUMENTS

Alison Balsom on her natural trumpet

“This trumpet is wonderful. It doesn't have any valves – valves were a 19th-century invention and before that time trumpets were just straight pipes. The trumpet is lower, almost twice as long as the modern trumpet, the one with valves, and what you're doing is playing the upper register of the harmonic series – so you only have the notes of the harmonic series available to you, and as you go higher they get closer together, so the trumpet is often playing at its absolutely highest register, which is why I call it the high-wire of the trumpet! You also don't have the valves to help you find the notes because it's all made entirely with your lips.

I actually play on a reproduction of a trumpet from that time, by Rainer Egger. I don't believe that anyone plays in earnest on an *actual* Baroque trumpet but the instruments we play on now are very similar. The one I play has tiny holes in it which kind of look like the holes you might find on a recorder, but they don't make the notes like



they would on a recorder – they actually just slightly adjust the intonation, the tuning. For the modern ear, for instance, where you'd hear an F in a C major scale, the fourth of the scale, you would hear it in a very particular pitch, whereas in the natural harmonic series it would be more like an F sharp, so of course if you're playing a melody with that note, to us it's going to sound out of tune, because we're used to what the piano is – equal

temperament, and that's not what they used in the Baroque period. So you use the holes for finding a pitch that sits satisfactorily with the other instruments – they don't really help you very much in terms of getting the note!

The sound of the instrument is just so glorious. It has so many different qualities to it which you simply don't get with the piccolo trumpet, and as much as I love the piccolo trumpet – and I'm the biggest fan of the great Maurice André who was an incredible virtuoso of this instrument – it doesn't have the same number of different colours and personalities. When I started to play the natural trumpet aged 21, at the Guildhall, it suddenly unlocked the entire Baroque era for me, not just trumpet music but everything I heard. It made sense of how a phrase works, and why it is so moving, and so elegant, and how to make the music sound more alive, and more convincing. It's been a love affair with the instrument ever since.”

BTHVN 2020 BEETHOVEN-HAUS BONN

BEETHOVEN

The New Complete Edition

Celebrating Beethoven's 250th Birthday in 2020 Deutsche Grammophon and Decca releases the most complete Beethoven edition ever issued. Over 175 hours of music, featuring recordings by over 250 of the greatest Beethoven performers. Includes more than two hours of newly recorded music and several world premieres plus a lavishly illustrated book.



BEETHOVEN-PLAYON.COM



ORCHESTRA *Insight ...*

Oslo Philharmonic

Our monthly series telling the story behind an orchestra

Founded 1919

Home Oslo Concert Hall

Music Director Vasily Petrenko (since 2013)

Music Director Designate Klaus Mäkelä (from 2020)

Good things come to those who wait, and Oslo waited decades for its own professional symphony orchestra. Various outfits were started up and wound down throughout the late 1800s and beyond until, in 1919, the new-fangled 'Filharmoniske Selskap' (Philharmonic Society) was established and proved it meant business. Its orchestra gave a first concert on September 27, 1919, at Logan Hall in Oslo (Grieg and Sinding were on the menu) conducted by Georg Schnéevoigt.

In the eight months that followed, the Society's orchestra gave 135 concerts, most of which sold out. Monteux, Ravel, Szymanowski, Hindemith, Beecham and Boult all came to Oslo to work with the ensemble in its first decades. A week before the Nazi fleet sailed into the Oslofjord in April 1940, Wilhelm Furtwängler was on the podium.

In the early days, repertoire was startlingly avant-garde and notably central European. But it was the music of Tchaikovsky that would make the orchestra's reputation abroad. In the late 1970s, a Latvian named Mariss Jansons worked with the orchestra for the first time and sensed an opportunity to make a relatively young ensemble a truly great one. He became Music Director in 1979, enacting a transformation in direct parallel with Rattle in Birmingham. It started with a recording of Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 5 hailed by *Gramophone* as 'the most vivid recording yet given to this favourite symphony' (3/85).



The next year, EMI signed the orchestra – now known as the Oslo Philharmonic – with the biggest contract in the label's history. Jansons would stay for 23 seasons.

In truth, the orchestra's legacy on record stretched way back. In 1956, it made the first ever commercial recording of Wagner's *Götterdämmerung*, starring Kirsten Flagstad, conducted by Øivin Fjelstad and released on Decca. Its catalogue of recordings of Norwegian music, from Fartein Valen and Ludwig Irgens-Jensen to Ørjan Matre and Lars Petter Hagen, remains unrivalled. Under current Chief Conductor Vasily Petrenko, it has made choice accounts of Scriabin and Strauss. Petrenko's 23-year-old successor (from the 2020 season) Klaus Mäkelä will lay down a Sibelius cycle, back on Decca.

Listen carefully to the post-Jansons Oslo Philharmonic and you can still hear his legacy in its sound. He took the orchestra apart and put it back together again, taking sectional rehearsals and, for some time, enforcing a brown-rice diet of Haydn. He honed a clean, smooth organism characterised by a lean but well-defined, silky string sound that facilitates extreme detail within itself and in other sections too. In a word, it's fresh – like Oslo air.

Andrew Mellor

IN THE STUDIO

● Onyx is soon to record an album with violinist **Viktoria Mullova** and double-bassist **Misha Mullov-Abbado**. The mother-son duo will be at the University of Surrey in January for 'Music We Love', to be engineered by Robin Hawkins. The release date is to be confirmed.

● Signum has a busy January in store. Highlights for the label include **Winchester College Choir** and **Onyx Brass** gathering at Merton College, Oxford to record a Christmas album, including a premiere by Cecilia McDowall. In California, meanwhile, the **Los Angeles Master Chorale** is recording **Eric Whitacre's** *Sacred Veil*; the sessions, at Chapman University in Orange, are being conducted by the composer. Both release dates are yet to be confirmed.

● Somm has recorded the final CD in its series dedicated to Stanford's chamber music. In November, the **Dante Quartet** and guests were at St Nicholas's church, Thames Ditton, to record the String Quintets Nos 1 and 2 (the latter being a premiere recording; the work is as yet unpublished) and has been edited by *Gramophone* critic Jeremy Dibble and Colleen Ferguson. The CD is due for release this September.

● Last month, the cellist **Steven Isserlis** was at All Hallows Gospel Oak to record the music of Sir John Tavener. He was joined by Sufi singer **Abi Sampa**, bass-baritone **Matthew Rose** and Trinity Boys Choir; **Omer Meir Wellber** was conducting the Philharmonia Orchestra. The recording, for Hyperion, is due for release in November.

● A major Malcolm Arnold recording is taking place at the Watford Colosseum in January. 'Malcolm Arnold: The Dancing Master' finds the **BBC Concert Orchestra** under **John Andrews**, and will include a world premiere of the last remaining work of Arnold ever to be recorded. Resonus will be releasing in October.

● In November, the *Gramophone* Award-winning **Freiburger Barockorchester** under **Pablo Heras-Casado** were at the Teldex Studio, Berlin, to record Beethoven's Symphony No 9; they were joined by the Zürcher Sing-Akademie and a fine line-up of soloists including the soprano **Christiane Karg** and the baritone **Florian Boesch**. Fortepianist **Kristian Bezuidenhout** was also there to record the *Choral Fantasy*. The release, on Harmonia Mundi, is scheduled for January 2021.

FROM WHERE I SIT

The decline in expertise in arts coverage is deeply worrying, warns Edward Seckerson



As a new year and a new decade beckons we continue to live in uncertain times for print journalism. The digital world has opened up new and exciting frontiers for sure; it has sharpened communication and promoted debate but it has also created the conditions whereby opinions – especially relating to the arts – are no longer honed from experience but rather thrown willy-nilly into a chaotic arena. Anyone can publish, everyone is a critic. The quality of criticism, more importantly the quality of the writing, is no longer of prime concern, it seems. And if one opera company's current policy takes hold punters won't for much longer be reading reviews, they'll be writing them.

Now don't get me wrong, it's important – very important – that new critical voices emerge and are encouraged, but against that one must weigh a worrying trend, indeed desperation, among arts providers to ensnare the elusive (some would say mythical) 'wider audience' and to peddle an almost pathological aversion to 'expertise'. It is increasingly the case that expertise is no longer celebrated but feared. With classical music in particular – though not in the pages of this publication, I hasten to add – one is confronted more and more with accusations of 'elitism' and 'exclusivity'. The assumption that 'expert' commentary – as in thorough, detailed and technical – somehow excludes the so-called wider audience seems to me utterly absurd. Such accusations are never levelled at sports commentary, for instance.

But a new breed of movers and shakers have emerged – they're called 'digital strategists' – and they are increasingly employed to advise on how audiences might be grown in areas like the arts. Potential audiences, they insist, have no time or inclination to take in anything of substance. They must be spoon-fed easily digestible morsels of information and nothing, nothing, that might be deemed 'instructive'. Only last year a series of long-form podcasts I hosted with exciting and articulate musical luminaries were quietly set aside because (presumably) they didn't tick the current boxes for 'accessibility'. What does that even mean? Aren't we now patronising our readers and listeners?

Expertise is exciting and infectious and as a young man with an appetite which grew into a passion for music I couldn't get enough of it. If a writer/critic is half decent there will be clarity as well as imagination and enthusiasm in the end result. The reader will hear what they read even before they've heard it. They will share the experience even if they weren't at the event or have not yet heard the recording in question. I can still remember word for word reviews posted in these pages from more than 30 years ago because they fired my imagination and led me to recordings that in some small or large way changed my life.

But what really worries me about this trend is that the longer it goes on the harder it is to resist because you condition your readers – and subsequently your audiences – to expect less. During my years on *The Independent* reviews and features were freely commissioned to embrace content of a richness and substance that would be inconceivable today. That isn't just sad but scary. **G**

BTHVN
2020

**BEETHOVEN-HAUS
BONN**

BEETHOVEN

The New Complete Edition




AVAILABLE
NOW!

**FIND OUT MORE:
BEETHOVEN-PLAYON.COM**







Having his own state-of-the art Vocalion gramophone led Compton Mackenzie to found not only The Gramophone magazine in 1923 but also the National Gramophonic Society - whose first recording was of a work by Beethoven



PRESERVING BEETHOVEN'S LEGACY

Since the arrival of the gramophone, the range and interpretative possibilities of Beethoven's music have been revealed as never before, writes **Richard Osborne**

There are moments in history when art and technology come together in a way that borders on the providential. One such moment occurred in 1926-27 when the arrival of electronic microphone-made recording coincided with the centenary of the death of one of the world's most famous composers, Ludwig van Beethoven.

As early as 1805 Beethoven was Europe's most talked-about composer. What rendered him unique, however, was the rise and rise of his posthumous reputation. Even with works as seemingly abstruse as the late string quartets, it was not only writers and musicians but also the public at large who sensed that this was great music and they knew what he meant. As Ernest Newman put it in a letter to Elgar in 1919: 'The music ... is so heart-searching because we *know* it runs all the time along the quickest nerves of our life, our struggles & aspirations & sufferings & exaltations.'

By the 1840s Beethoven was also being seen as a man whose achievements involved a moral dimension that went beyond music. Even now the idea persists that the 'great' Beethoven interpreters are those who in some way or another engage that dimension.

The 1927 centenary produced several fine studies – JWN Sullivan's *Beethoven: His Spiritual Development* and Newman's own flawed but fascinating *The Unconscious Beethoven* prime among them; but it also spawned a number of revisionist polemics. One such came from Edward J Dent, professor of music at the University of Cambridge, who declared that much of Beethoven's music was 'old hat'. He also declared the man himself to be a public nuisance, the kind of fellow who blocks out other people's light.

Not that such polemics cut much ice with the listening public. Newly enfranchised by the wireless and the wonders of microphone-made recording, the man in the street was in no mood to take advice from an overeducated don.

ENTER MACKENZIE

The year 1923, which saw John Reith take control of the newly founded British Broadcasting Company, was the year in which novelist and man-of-affairs Compton Mackenzie founded *The Gramophone*. He had recently acquired a state-of-the-art Vocation gramophone, only to discover that knowing where to acquire records of 'good' music was no easy matter. Catalogues were mainly intended for dealers; worse, little of real substance appeared to have been recorded.

Mackenzie knew HMV's 1913 Berlin recording of the Fifth

Symphony conducted by Arthur Nikisch; but, in 1922, it was the only complete recording of a classical symphony in the company's catalogue. As for gramophone-friendly chamber

music, though the rival Columbia label had published some semi-complete recordings, HMV appeared to have none. Not a man to stand idly by, Mackenzie now added to his quiver by founding the National Gramophonic Society (NGS), a private subscription-based label designed to make good some of these chamber music omissions.

We now know a great deal about the NGS thanks to a superbly documented doctoral thesis by the scholar and former BBC Radio 3 producer Nick Morgan (*The National Gramophonic Society, Studies in the History of Recording*, Vol 2; CRQ Editions: 2016). As Morgan's researches reveal, by 1926 Beethoven was, by some distance, Britain's most recorded composer as far as long-form piano and chamber music were concerned. It comes as no surprise, then, that when Mackenzie launched the NGS in late 1924, he did so with a complete recording of Beethoven's *Harp* Quartet. Two other Beethoven quartets followed, chosen by ballot by NGS subscribers: *Rasumovsky* Quartet No 1 and, to mark the centenary itself, the last quartet, Op 135.

This would prove to be something of a golden age for the Beethoven quartets on record, crowned by the widely revered recordings of the five late quartets which the Busch Quartet made

*By 1926 Beethoven was, by some distance,
Britain's most recorded composer in
long-form piano and chamber music*

in London and New York between 1933 and 1941. Sadly, the gramophone can be fickle in its affections. By 1950, only 10 of Beethoven's 17 string quartets were readily available on record, none of them in a recommendable version. Writing in the 1955 edition of *The Record Guide*, Edward Sackville-West noted: 'More and more we find ourselves getting down from the shelves our older sets, recorded by the Busch, the Budapest and the Léner Quartets, and listening to them with a pleasure enhanced (and made poignant) by the rarity with which such playing is heard these days.'

Things improved during the 1960s as the Amadeus became, for some, the Beethoven quartet of choice; though it was not until the early 1970s that collectors sensed that a new golden age was about to dawn.

EARLY COLLECTING

In July 1927, Mackenzie wrote a three-page feature: 'My Suggestions for Getting Beethoven Records'. Two

things were uppermost in his mind: the need to dispense up-to-date advice on recommendable recordings and the need to stagger costs at a time when records remained something of a luxury item. (It's estimated that out of the £160 average annual wage of a typical collector around £4 would have been spent on records.)

Take the centenary month itself, March 1927. Frederic Lamond's recording of the *Pathétique* Sonata could be bought for 13s, Albert Coates's *Eroica* was priced at 39s, and Felix Weingartner's new Columbia recording of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony was a hefty 52s. Polydor imports were less expensive (Wilhelm Furtwängler's 1926 Beethoven Fifth was 10s cheaper than Coates's *Eroica*) though not necessarily good value. In order to market Richard Strauss's superb 1926 Berlin account of the Seventh Symphony as a conventional four-disc set, Polydor put the finale onto a single side, courtesy of a ruinously quick tempo and a 171-bar cut.

Mackenzie began his 1927 recommendations with the *Waldstein* Sonata (the Lamond recording at 19s 6d) and the Fifth Symphony conducted by Landon Ronald (26s). Remembering being told that the opening of the Fifth Symphony represented fate knocking on the door, he predicted that such an explanation would have the 'power to waylay the imagination of youth for a long time to come'. Nor was he far wrong. My own



Beethoven pioneers: top - Berlin Philharmonic and Nikisch; bottom - Busch Quartet

first record, bought after a fortnight packing frozen peas during a school holiday in 1959, was a 10-inch Columbia LP of the symphony conducted by Otto Klemperer. Naturally, I'd pondered with care Andrew Porter's (glowing) *Gramophone* review (11/56) before parting with my 29s 6½d.

SPECIAL EDITIONS

The 1929 stock market crash cost the recording industry dear. The NGS didn't survive, but the idea of purchase by subscription did. For gramophone pioneer Fred Gaisberg, now senior producer at the newly formed conglomerate EMI, this was the ideal marketing tool with which to tempt collectors interested in building their own bespoke libraries. The company's Hugo Wolf Society edition, masterminded by Walter Legge, had been an unexpected success. Now, in 1932, Gaisberg turned his attention to Beethoven: a 'Society Edition' designed

to deliver over five years a complete cycle of the 32 piano sonatas.

The pianist was Artur Schnabel, a musician famously opposed to the gramophone ('the nature of a performance is to be heard but once') but a revered Beethovenian. Never having recorded for anything other than a mechanical piano roll, he was tested to the limit by the ordeal. (The records belie what was an astonishing technique, Claudio Arrau later told me.) Ordeal or not, the cycle was a landmark in the history of the gramophone which sold in significant numbers not only to private collectors but to gramophone societies and schools up and down the land.

Curiously, the strategy, or a variant of it, would not be used again for a major Beethoven project until Deutsche Grammophon invested 1.5m Deutschmarks in the now legendary set of the nine symphonies which Herbert von Karajan recorded with the Berlin Philharmonic in 1961-62. Numerous conductors from Weingartner onwards had recorded all nine symphonies, yet this was the first time in the history of the gramophone that a cycle had been recorded and marketed as an organically conceived entity.

Legge, who was Karajan's close collaborator during his years with EMI, predicted a 'colossal financial catastrophe'. In the event, it was anything but, such was the prestige of the project and the exceptional quality of everything about it: the



Otto Klemperer's Beethoven: scale and rock-like integrity



Gaisberg (left) persuaded Schnabel (right) to record all the Beethoven piano sonatas

music-making, the engineering and DG's famously silent vinyl pressings. The cycle sold over a million copies within its first decade, 10 times the original break-even estimate.

OLD TRADITIONS AND NEW IDEAS

In a career that spanned two centuries and the great Classical–Romantic divide, Beethoven made his name both as an old-style improviser and as the creator of a line of set-in-stone masterworks. How best to play such music had been work-in-progress since the start of the 19th century; and in 1927 there were at least two generations of musicians who could claim to be the heirs of that process. One such figure was the young Arrau. When Schnabel died in 1951, Arrau recalled his adherence to the printed page: 'He was the first celebrated performer to illustrate the concept – *strangely enough, a new one at the time* [my emphasis] – of the interpreter as the servant of music rather than the exploiter of it.'

With the gramophone holding a mirror to all forms of eccentricity, fidelity to the score became the thing – the new battleground

By 1927 this was, indeed, the new battleground. With the gramophone holding a mirror to all forms of eccentricity, fidelity to the score became the thing, powerfully abetted by the new ideology *Neue Sachlichkeit* ('new functionalism' or 'new objectivity'), which held sway in Germany and Italy in the 1920s and '30s. This, too, was gramophone friendly. As Yehudi Menuhin later observed: 'A recording does not bear hearing more than a few times, if you can predict, not the note, but the interpreter's private twist or change or eccentricity.'

The 'new objectivity' was well served by the likes of Toscanini, Erich Kleiber, pianist Wilhelm Backhaus and others. Only later did the concept turn quasi-scientific as conductors began treating Beethoven's often fallible metronome marks as articles of faith. The *locus classicus* of this obsession came in the form of a high-speed – and, it has to be said, utterly dazzling – recording of the Eighth Symphony which Hermann Scherchen, an unrepentant modernist, made with Sir Thomas Beecham's RPO for the British Nixa company in 1954.

Others were more pragmatic. Klemperer, a convinced new objectivist, never let ideology interfere with his own instinctive

Hazard Chase

International artist & project management

Brodsky Quartet



This spring sees the Brodsky Quartet celebrate the highly anticipated release of their late Beethoven string quartet recordings, on the Chandos label.

January will also mark the beginning of a series of five 'Rush-Hour Lates' at Kings Place in London, where they hold the prestigious position of Artists in Residence, with programmes not only celebrating Beethoven's later compositions, but also the works of more contemporary composers such as Karen Tanaka and fellow Hazard Chase artist Henning Kraggerud.

Visit our website for full contact details and to see current artist and project lists.

www.hazardchase.co.uk



@hazardchaseltd



Hazard Chase Limited

feel for the scale and rock-like integrity of Beethoven's every utterance or with his own ability to take some of Beethoven's greatest works – *Fidelio*, *Missa solemnis*, the Ninth Symphony – to hitherto barely known heights.

The pianist Wilhelm Kempff, another legend of the gramophone, was too intuitive a musician, too much a poet and dreamer, ever to be classed as a new objectivist. True, his ability to clarify textures with sharp dynamic contrasts and astonishingly clean articulation was integral to his craft. But the beguiling mix of freshness and rigour he brought to Beethoven's music derived in some measure from his endlessly inventive way with those ornamentations – appoggiaturas, trills, turns – which are the lifeblood of Beethoven's pianistic discourse. A Heinrich Barth pupil (as was Artur Schnabel, a comparably great Beethoven pianist in chamber music and those sonatas he chose to play), Kempff was versed in many schools but an adherent of none.

No one spoke ill of Kempff. Arrau, an altogether more embattled Beethovenian, thought the world of him, as did Schnabel, who instructed that Kempff should complete HMV's Beethoven Society Edition of sonatas if he himself failed to do so. In fact, Kempff had been recording the sonatas for Polydor since 1925. British audiences barely knew his name, but *Gramophone* readers lucky enough to possess any one of those inter-war Polydor recordings often thought him nonpareil.

It is a sad fact that Furtwängler, unadvisedly perhaps, did his best to avoid the recording studio. His readings, long pondered and rigorously thought through, were never improvised; what they did have, however, was a capacity to give the impression of the music being recreated afresh at each new hearing. He was himself a composer, as was Leonard Bernstein, whose love of Beethoven was rooted in what he saw as the music's potent mix of inevitability and unpredictability – a paradigm of life itself, said Bernstein.

Bernstein's eccentrically recorded and occasionally rudely played 1960s New York Philharmonic cycle of the nine symphonies offers a real roller-coaster ride. However, it's his 1960 account of the *Missa solemnis* that most stays in the mind. At the time, Bernstein was gestating his own *Kaddish* Symphony. Born of a moral and religious crisis in his own life, this too, in its final pages, is both a song of thanksgiving and a prayer for spiritual rebirth in a troubled age.

PERIOD PERFORMANCE

It was WH Auden's contention that all great works of art exhibit two qualities: their Nowness, something any competent



Karajan: whose 1961-62 symphony cycle was the first to be conceived as a single entity

With the arrival of the LP, the first great composer anniversary comprehensively to be celebrated once again featured Beethoven

historian can accurately date, and their Permanence: what survives long after the work's maker and society have ceased to exist. When the historically aware period-instrument movement came along (natural successor to new objectivism), Nowness was all.

By the 1980s, the gramophone needed such a movement, if for no other reason than to refresh the catalogue and sell more Beethoven. But how? Once again, piano music thrived, as a new generation of keyboard builders, and period performers such as Steven Lubin and Robert Levin, allowed us both to re-enact the journey Beethoven himself had taken, and better to understand it. The string quartet repertoire, for reasons too complex to go into here, proved more problematic.

This left the choral works, their fortunes already transformed by specialist choirs and a revolution in choral techniques, and the symphonies themselves.

Here it is Roger Norrington's work that best stands the test of time. Undistracted, as some were, by such variables as orchestra size, contemporary pitch and so on, Norrington insisted that the only absolutes were speeds, note lengths, bowing and phrasing. Of these, speed was the most problematic, though as Richard Taruskin noted in his essay 'The New Antiquity', Norrington's strength lay in his refusal to ask whether the printed markings were 'suitable'. Rather, he 'assumes they are ... after which it's a case of stripping down and imagining afresh articulation, phrasing and balance'. Less successful – indeed, it's one of the

afflictions of the modern age – would be the move to invite all orchestras to adopt a vibrato-light 'period' style irrespective of the music in hand or the orchestra's own sometimes comparably

'informed' performing history. One consequence has been the near-death of legato playing. (Beethoven was revered for his legato playing, even on the instruments of the 1790s.) Creating a true legato, said Furtwängler, was a conductor's greatest challenge. Without it, no music can truly sing.

ANNIVERSARIES

Anniversary editions of great composers were a non-starter in the days of shellac records. The discs were bulky, playing time limited and repertoire insufficiently developed. The arrival of the LP came too late for Bach's 1950 bicentenary and, indeed, for the Mozart bicentenary in 1956. So the first great composer anniversary comprehensively to be celebrated by the gramophone once again featured Beethoven: the bicentenary of his birth in 1970.

That 1970 bicentenary was spearheaded by Deutsche Grammophon, Germany's leading record label and the world's best funded, thanks to inspired leadership and to the wealth



Wilhelm Kempff brought a beguiling mix of freshness and rigour to Beethoven's music

accrued during post-war West Germany's 'economic miracle'. Not everyone was impressed by DG's grand 20-volume edition. Thomas Heinitz, a senior reviewer on *Records and Recording*, for which I wrote at the time, harrumphed that the one composer who didn't need to be thus fêted was Beethoven, since 'every worthwhile piece of music he wrote has been recorded'. This rather invited the question: who decides what is worthwhile?

In the event, DG assembled recordings of the entire mainstream repertory, often commissioning new recordings (the Kempff, Henryk Szeryng and Pierre Fournier piano trios, for instance) where older ones were deemed unsuitable. There was also a great deal of infill, beginning with Beethoven's very first piece 'without opus', the *Ritterballett* ('Knight's Ballet') of 1791. Not that this appeared in 1970. Having secured a 1969 performance of rare urbanity and grace from Heribert Ritter von Karajan (as, appropriately, he was baptised) and the chamber musicians of his Berlin Philharmonic, DG held it over until the company's second great Beethoven edition in 1997.

As that 1997 edition showed, not everything had been recorded by 1970. The world still awaited a representative recording of *Leonore* (*Fidelio* in embryo), and the vocal music continued to be poorly represented. Beethoven has not gone down in history as the singer's friend, yet it's an earnest mark of his genius that his vocal output contains one world-changing initiative: music's first through-composed song-cycle, *An die ferne Geliebte*, of which Peter Schreier has made at least one near definitive recording. It takes taste and curiosity to revive Beethoven's more neglected songs, as Anne Sofie von Otter would later do, or Cecilia Bartoli with Beethoven's Italian settings. And then there are those astonishing folk song arrangements to which the 1997 DG edition devoted an unmissable seven-CD anthology.

BEETHOVEN IN 2020

Nowadays, it's probable that everything has been recorded, much of it well recorded, and some of it recorded beyond all commercial reason. It's amusing to look back to December 1931 and find *The Gramophone* asking why, in times of financial stringency, we should think of investing in a second recording of the quartet Op 59 No 1 when we already have the excellent Léner version.

What has changed beyond all recognition over the past 50 years is the rediscovery and expert resuscitation of more than

a century of recorded history. As Sir Colin Davis said of Arrau in Berlin in the 1920s, 'There would have been so many minds around at that time, and so much could be taken from these minds.' Thanks to the gramophone, those minds speak to us still.

'One of the greatest blessings conferred on our lives by the Arts', wrote Auden, 'is that they are our chief means of breaking bread with the dead. Without communication with the dead, a fully human life is not possible.' What he said of the arts in general can equally be applied to the gramophone. Beethoven would be with us still, with or without the gramophone. What the medium does, however, in its role as civilisation's 'recording angel', is preserve for us the work of those legions of musicians who, in a thousand different ways, have down the years borne witness to the still-living wonder that is Ludwig van Beethoven. **G**

MUST-HAVE BEETHOVEN ON RECORD

Six landmark sets you can't be without in Beethoven year



Symphonies

Nos 1-9

Berlin PO / Karajan
(r1961-62)
DG (2/63)

The exceptional quality, both musical and technical, of this, the first set of the nine in the history of the gramophone to be released as a single cycle, took the symphonies to audiences old and new across the globe; and did so in well-assimilated readings that refuse to date.



Piano Concertos

Nos 1-5

Kempff *pf* Berlin PO /
Van Kempen
(r1953)

DG (10/03)

Whereas Artur Schnabel disliked recording, his revered younger contemporary Wilhelm Kempff relished it: witness his complete mono (1950s) and stereo (1960s) cycles of the 32 sonatas and five concertos. The earlier sets possibly have the edge but, either way, Kempff's Beethoven should be in any library.



Late

String Quartets

Busch Quartet
(r1933-41)
Warner (8/99)

Here only the best will do, and that, history tells us, is the Busch Quartet. 'One of the great idealists of present-day music' is how Fritz Kreisler described Adolf Busch himself. Hear the quartet in the Cavatina of Op 130, over which Beethoven is said to have wept as he wrote.



Complete

Piano Sonatas

Schnabel *pf*
(r1932-37)
Warner (12/16)

Nowhere do we have so complete a portrait of Beethoven the man and the musician than in the 32 sonatas written between 1793 and 1822. Yet it was a portrait that lay largely hidden from general view until the arrival of the gramophone and this pioneering exploration by Artur Schnabel.



Fidelio

Ludwig *mez*
Vickers *ten* et al;
Philharmonia Chor
& Orch / Klemperer

Warner (6/62)

In those works – *Fidelio*, *Missa solemnis* and the Ninth – where Beethoven engages closely with politics and spirituality, Otto Klemperer had few rivals. His 1951 Vienna recording of *Missa solemnis* (6/53; now an Archipon download) and his 1962 recording of *Fidelio* are without peer.



Period-instrument performances

ORR / Gardiner et al
DG Archiv

There can be no better overview of the insights afforded by historically informed Beethoven performance than this timely reissue of John Eliot Gardiner's complete Beethoven recordings with the Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique. Robert Levin's accounts of the keyboard concertos are of especial interest.

LUDWIG VAN BEETHOVEN 250

IGOR LEVIT —
32 PIANO SONATAS

CUARTETO CASALS —
16 STRING QUARTETS

FRANK PETER
ZIMMERMANN —
10 VIOLIN SONATAS

NINA STEMME —
FIDELIO

L.V.

B

LADIES VERSUS
BEETHOVEN —
ORCHESTRAL
FESTIVAL

ROYAL STOCKHOLM
PHILHARMONIC
ORCHESTRA &
SAKARI ORAMO
— AND MORE



KONSERTHUSET
STOCKHOLM

BEETHOVEN LIVE

Throughout the year many of the world's leading classical artists will be taking projects inspired by Beethoven's 250th anniversary around the globe – and to a venue near you

Carnegie Hall, New York

From January onwards

New York's celebrated venue is doing Beethoven proud with an impressive roll-call of great musicians including **Evgeny Kissin**, **Quatuor Ébène**, **Emanuel Ax**, **Leonidas Kavakos**, **Yo-Yo Ma**, **Yefim Bronfman**, **Anne-Sophie Mutter**, **Mitsuko Uchida**, **The Cleveland Orchestra**, **Maurizio Pollini**, **Kristian Bezuidenhout** and **Sir András Schiff**. The symphonies are played by **Sir John Eliot Gardiner** with his **Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique (ORR)** and by **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** and **The Philadelphia Orchestra**. carnegiehall.org

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam

From January onwards

Highlights include a six-day symphony cycle performed by four period orchestras: the **Orchestra of the 18th Century**, the **Orchestre des Champs-Élysées**, the **Freiburger Barockorchester** and the **OAE**. The Royal Concertgebouw Orchestra itself plays all five Beethoven piano concertos on one day with soloist **Krystian Zimerman**. Note that some events are likely to be streamed. concertgebouw.nl

London Philharmonic Orchestra

From January onwards

Yes they're based at the Southbank (see below), but the **LPO's** Beethoven programming warrants its own entry. It includes a Beethoven symphony cycle with **Vladimir Jurowski**, **Vasily Petrenko**, **Edward Gardner** and more, while other highlights include: **Robin Ticciati** conducting the Triple Concerto with **Anne-Sophie Mutter**; **Osmö Vänska** conducting Piano Concerto No 4 with **Jeremy Denk**; chamber music led by **Anne-Sophie Mutter**; and **Vladimir Jurowski** conducting *Cantata on the Death of Emperor Joseph II* with **Lise Davidsen**. This all ties into a larger '2020 Vision' theme exploring Beethoven's legacy across three centuries. lpo.org.uk

Southbank Centre, London

From January onwards

Topping Southbank Centre's Beethoven offerings is Artist-in-Residence **Pierre-Laurent**



'Mirga's Beethoven': the dynamic Lithuanian conductor leads CBSO celebrations

City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra

January 29-30

Beethoven 250 coincides with the CBSO's 100th birthday: its two-night **Mirga's Beethoven** programme sees Beethoven's Symphonies Nos 2 and 4 either side of Unsuk Chin's centenary commission, *SPIRA*. cbsoco.uk

Barbican, London

From February onwards

To kick things off, the 'Beethoven Weekender' features all the symphonies, presented by John Suchet with performers including the **Bournemouth SO** and **Kirill Karabits**, the **CBSO** and **Mirga Gražinytė-Tyla**, the **RLPO** and **Vasily Petrenko**, the **Royal Northern Sinfonia** and **Lars Vogt**, and the **Hallé** and **Sir Mark Elder**. There are also quartets from the **Carducci Quartet** and violin music from **Tai Murray** and **Daniel Sepec**, plus talks, installations and exhibitions. Elsewhere, **LSO** highlights include **Sir Simon Rattle** conducting *Christ on the Mount of Olives* alongside Berg's Violin Concerto with **Lisa Batiashvili** (to be recorded for LSO Live, broadcast on ARTE television, then toured). Other standouts include **Manfred Honeck** conducting the Violin Concerto with **Anne-Sophie Mutter**, and a symphony cycle from **Sir John Eliot Gardiner's ORR**. Plus, don't miss two of the piano concertos from **András Schiff** with **Iván Fischer's Budapest Festival Orchestra**. lso.co.uk; barbican.org.uk

Quatuor Ébène, Europe & US

From February onwards

As a way of coupling the Beethoven celebrations with their own 20th anniversary, **Quatuor Ébène** have embarked on a gargantuan two-year Beethoven cycle project, recorded live for Erato and also filmed. This year they perform complete cycles at venues including Verbier, Carnegie Hall and Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. At some venues, they're sharing cycles with the **Belcea Quartet**. quatuorebene.com

Orchestre Révolutionnaire et Romantique

February 9 - May 16

The ORR's aforementioned Barbican concerts

Aimard curating a 'Beethoven and the Avant-Garde' series: Aimard joins **François-Xavier Roth** and Cologne's **Gürzenich Orchestra** for a programme mixing Beethoven with works by 20th- and 21st-century composers – all part of a programme they're touring to European venues including Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie. 'Beyond Beethoven 9', meanwhile, sees Associate Artist **Marin Alsop** lead a performance of Beethoven's Ninth with four new compositions inserted between the original four movements, climaxing with a 350-strong choir performing a new English interpretation of Schiller's text. The concert is part of Alsop's year-long 'All Together – Global Ode to Joy' project which reaches its culmination with a performance at New York's Carnegie Hall. southbankcentre.co.uk; marinalso.com

Wigmore Hall, London

From January onwards

A season-long Beethoven exploration covers all of Beethoven's chamber and instrumental works. Pianist **Jonathan Biss** is currently midway through a piano sonata cycle which concludes in June and ties in with a complete recorded cycle available on Orchid Classics. Other highlights include: violin sonatas from **James Ehnes** and **Andrew Armstrong**; quartets from the **Belcea Quartet**; string trios from **Jean-Guihen Queyras**, **Daniel Sepec** and **Tabea Zimmermann**; **Sir András Schiff** performing and discussing the three final piano sonatas; and **Cédric Tiberghien** performing piano variations. All of the Wigmore's Beethoven-themed concerts are being live-streamed and then archived for future viewing. wigmore-hall.org.uk

are part of a worldwide tour that also celebrates their own 30-year anniversary, starting at Barcelona's Palau de la Música, and taking in venues including Carnegie Hall and Chicago's Harris Theater.

monteverdi.co.uk

Royal Scottish National Orchestra

From February 19

'Beethoven Revolution' in Glasgow and Edinburgh heads up **RSNO's** celebrations. Highlights include Piano Concerto No 4 from Artist-in-Residence **Steven Osborne** and '[Inside] Out: Beethoven@250': Principal Guest Conductor **Elim Chan** and presenter **Tom Redmond** explore the man behind the myth with live musical examples. rsno.org.uk

Insula Orchestra

From February 21

Laurence Equilbey and her period-instrument **Insula Orchestra** are presenting a new staged production of Beethoven's *Pastoral* Symphony No 6, directed by Carlus Padrissa of Catalan theatre group La Fura dels Baus with scenography by Mihael Milunovic and featuring 360-degree video projections, actors and dancers. Catch it in Aix-en-Provence, Paris, other European destinations and China. pastoralproject.org; insulaorchestra.fr

Théâtre des Champs-Élysées, Paris

February 23

This concert from pianist **Shani Diluka** and Indian musicians **Mitel Purihot** and **Mehboob Nadeem** nods to Beethoven's interest in Indian poems by punctuating the *Moonlight* and *Appassionata* Sonatas with an improvisation for sitar and tabla entitled *Moonlight Raga*. The programme has been recorded for a February release on Warner Classics. theatrechampselysees.fr

Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

March 1-17 (March 17 in cinemas)

Covent Garden celebrates the anniversary with a brand-new production of *Fidelio* by Tobias Kratzer. **Antonio Pappano** conducts a starry line-up headed by **Lise Davidsen** as Leonore and **Jonas Kaufmann** as Florestan. roh.org.uk

St John's Smith Square, London

March 8

Howard Shelley marks his 70th birthday and the Beethoven anniversary by performing all five piano concertos in the space of a day with the **London Mozart Players**. We're told the event may be broadcast or streamed. sjss.org.uk



Jaap Van Zweden directs two symphony cycles with the Hong Kong Philharmonic

Beethovenfest Bonn

March 13-22; September 4-27

The first of Beethovenfest Bonn's two festivals, 'Be Embraced', features a symphony cycle from **musicAeterna** with **Teodor Currentzis** and **Giovanni Antonini**; there's a 'European cycle' too, featuring five Beethoven-inspired works commissioned from five composers corresponding to the countries of Beethoven's Europe - Italy, France, Russian, Austria and Germany. The second festival, 'Rise Again, Yes, Rise Again', presents a mix of orchestral and chamber concerts, including **Marek Janowski** conducting the **Chorus and Orchestra of the Bayreuth Festival** in Symphony No 9. beethovenfest.de

Theater an der Wien, Vienna

March 16-27

Don't miss a new anniversary production of *Fidelio* by Christoph Waltz in the theatre where the opera was premiered in 1805. **Manfred Honeck** conducts the **Vienna SO** with a cast headed up by **Eric Cutler** as Florestan and **Nicole Chevalier** as Leonore. theater-wien.at

Kings Place, London

March 28

You can always count on **Aurora Orchestra** to do something different, and we're intrigued by their late-night 'surround-sound' *Pastoral* Symphony performance - part of Kings Place's year-long 'Nature Unwrapped' series - where they perform passages from memory while inviting the audience to roam around the different instrumental sections. kingsplace.co.uk

Lighthouse, Poole

April 1

'Imperial Beethoven' sees **Sunwook Kim** making his professional conducting debut, performing an all-Beethoven programme with the **Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra**, including the *Egmont* Overture, Symphony No 4 and Piano Concerto No 5. bsolive.com

Garsington Opera

June 25 - July 17

Gérard Korsten make his Garsington debut conducting *Fidelio*, with **Toby Spence** as Florestan. It's also being recorded by OperaVision for streaming in October. garsingtonopera.org

Cheltenham Festival

June 27-28; July 3-12

The Music Festival's rich Beethoven programming begins with a pre-festival 'Beethoven at Syde' chamber weekend. Then 'Beethoven Up Close' during the actual festival sees artists including the tenor **Ian Bostridge** with **Imogen Cooper** emulate the chamber atmospheres of Beethoven's own day with recitals in the drawing rooms of privately owned Regency town houses around Cheltenham. cheltenhamfestivals.com

Verbier Festival, Switzerland

July 17 - August 2

Valery Gergiev conducts the **Verbier Festival Orchestra** in the Triple Concerto with soloists **Leonidas Kavakos**, **Gautier Capuçon** and **Yuja Wang**. He also conducts a *Choral* Symphony with singers including **René Pape** and **Magdalena Kožená**. Most concerts will be streamed on Medici.tv. verbierfestival.com

Salzburg Festival

July 18 - August 30

Among the highlights are a piano sonata cycle played by **Igor Levit**, the *Choral* Symphony conducted by **Riccardo Muti** and the Violin Concerto played by **Anne-Sophie Mutter** with the **Pittsburgh SO** and **Manfred Honeck**. salzburgerfestspiele.at

Tokyo Olympics

July 24 - August 9

The 2020 Tokyo Olympics' cultural programme is being delivered by the Tokyo Nippon Festival, whose headline offering comes from the **Berlin Philharmonic** and **Gustavo Dudamel** in a Beethoven-themed opening night concert. And don't miss the Beethoven 9 in Shinjuku Gyoen English Park. tokyo2020.org; berliner-philharmoniker.de

Hong Kong Philharmonic

2019/20 and 2020/21 seasons

Our Orchestra of the Year is hosting two symphony cycles under **Jaap van Zweden**, a piano concerto cycle from pianists including **Lang Lang** and **Víkingur Ólafsson** and a *Fidelio*, to be recorded for Naxos. hkphil.org

BEEETHHOVEN

JAAP'S

Fidelio

Live recording project
in 2020

Symphonies nos. 1-9

Complete concertos

BEETHOVEN
250TH

Rudolf Buchbinder
Khatia Buniatishvili
Rachel Cheung
Louise Kwong
Lang Lang
Anne-Sophie Mutter
Víkingur Ólafsson
Nobuyuki Tsujii

(in alphabetical order)

and more

JAAP VAN

ZWEDEN

© Wong Kin Chung/HK Phil



Young artist, old soul

At just 20 years old Sheku Kanneh-Mason takes inspiration from the great cellists of the distant past – and his models for Elgar’s Cello Concerto are no exception, finds **Richard Bratby**

Anyone who’s anxious about the future of classical music should stand in the foyer of London’s Royal Academy of Music (RAM) shortly before nine in the morning. Students hurry through, carrying violin cases and music folders; a soprano trills down a corridor and a double bass lumbers awkwardly by, with only its owner’s legs visible as they head to a lesson or practice studio. This is the future right here: the next generation of musicians, energetically mastering their art. And amid this swirl of young talent, the only thing that makes Sheku Kanneh-Mason stand out as he pushes through the front door, cello strapped to his back, is the fact that he has an assistant with him, tugging his travelling case.

She’s only here because I am. Not that it’s exactly normal for third-year undergraduates to have press interviews, any more than it is for them to have records out on Decca; or a diary of international engagements that will take them to Frankfurt later the same day, and then to Germany, Sweden, France, Italy, Canada and the USA. But unless you’ve been living in a hermitage for the last few years, you’ll already know that Kanneh-Mason is not exactly your usual young cellist.

He’s the son of parents from Antigua and Sierra Leone, and grew up in Nottingham with six siblings, each of them a strikingly gifted musician in their own right. They appeared on *Britain’s Got Talent* in 2015 – not an obvious career move for a young classical musician. Then Sheku won the 2016 BBC Young Musician competition, played at the wedding of the Duke and Duchess of Sussex in May 2018, and saw his debut recording – of Shostakovich’s First Cello Concerto – climb to Number One in the US Billboard Emerging Artists chart. I’ll repeat that: this is the cellist who, in 2018, took Shostakovich to the top of the US pop charts. (He knocked the rapper Lil Baby off pole position.) And here he is, still only 20, sitting in the boardroom at the RAM, having just recorded Elgar’s Cello Concerto with Sir Simon Rattle and the

London Symphony Orchestra. To say that expectations are high is like saying that Netrebko and Kaufmann have a knack for selling tickets.

The press release makes much of the idea that he was inspired by Jacqueline du Pré. Well, obviously: he and every other cellist on the planet. Yet whenever I’ve heard him play the Elgar, whether on disc, or live in Bristol in 2018, du Pré has not been the comparison that’s sprung to mind. When I say this, he thinks for a moment before responding: ‘I get inspiration from different places. But I think it’s also the piece itself. It’s so ... I don’t know – so detailed in the way it’s written. I studied a lot of the harmony to build my own way of playing the piece. And of course, I’m very inspired by Jacqueline du Pré’s playing and approach to music in general, but not necessarily in *that* way – I would never want to copy what someone else does, because then it’s not genuine, and it’s never going to be.’

Genuineness, you sense, is a quality that Kanneh-Mason prizes. There can’t have been a young classical musician in living memory who’s found themselves at the centre of so much international media interest (that royal wedding performance was watched by some 29 million TV viewers in the US alone). But there are no pre-prepped answers, no polished anecdotes; no sense of the hardened media performer. It’s exactly like talking to any other intelligent, sensitive but slightly nervous student musician. So how did he find his own way into the Elgar?

‘Just playing it, and listening to the harmony, tells you a lot. The way the chords subtly move and change; there’s a lot of expression in those chords alone. The concerto is a mixture of things, including confusion. Particularly in the second movement, there’s a kind of unsettled quality. Maybe a lot of people see that movement as humorous, but I think it’s more unsettled and unstable than humorous. And the first movement I think is very sad, but not always outwardly sad. And maybe that’s what Elgar was like as a person. There’s a lot of loneliness and sadness, but not in an obvious, “out there”, way.’

And, of course, Kanneh-Mason has had a collaborator with a track record: Rattle has recorded the Elgar Concerto before, with Truls Mørk and Sol Gabetta. This was Kanneh-Mason’s first time working with Rattle in the studio, and it seems to have been a happy experience. ‘I really loved working with him because it felt so free. He always makes it very clear what his intention is, and that’s really lovely to play with.’

‘We were constantly discovering the piece as we were playing it. We weren’t so much stopping and doing small chunks, as playing through whole movements and seeing how they came out. That meant that we could explore the concerto through playing it – and that’s the best way. And yes, it’s exciting when ideas come together. So much of what makes this piece amazing is how the orchestral writing interacts with the solo cello. It’s rarely just the melody and accompaniment: there are a lot of voices going on.’

It’s a revealing observation, and an intriguing one for a player who’s being presented and promoted as a star soloist. With Kanneh-Mason, there are always other voices going on: how could there not be, when he grew up with six other musicians? We’ll return to that. Meanwhile, he’s mentioned that he gets inspiration from various places: before we leave the Elgar, could he give us some idea of which players (apart from du Pré) fire his imagination? His response is not, perhaps, the one that you might expect from a player who was born in 1999 and who – for all his international fame – has yet to graduate from college.

‘I’m listening a lot to Beatrice Harrison. I love her playing, and its vocal quality. I guess what’s special about string playing

particularly around that time is that it's not just like singing but almost like talking with the instrument. I think that's what makes it special, and I've learnt a lot from recordings of that period.'

This takes us on to the rest of the disc. There's the obvious pairing of Elgar's Romance for bassoon and orchestra (a piece long since annexed by cellists, and here arranged for string ensemble), and Fauré's *Élégie* (arranged for cello ensemble). But there's also a selection of pieces which have a distinctly 'retro' feel. Klengel's *Hymnus* of 1920 is a super-saturated slice of late Romantic lushness for 12 cellos: beloved by cellists, but little known to the wider public. Then there's Bridge's *Spring Song* (originally for violin and piano, arranged here for string ensemble) and – most intriguing of all – two pieces by that most unfashionable of 20th-century masters, Bloch: the *Prélude* for string quartet, and 'Prayer' (the first movement of *From Jewish Life*). With an older player you might attribute such choices to nostalgia. Kanneh-Mason, however, has simply been digging deep into his instrument's heritage, and has discovered that this music genuinely speaks to him.

'I wanted to record pieces that are similar to the Elgar in a certain way. I mean, the Klengel was written just a year after the Elgar Concerto. Lots of the other pieces I chose because I was inspired by recordings that were made around the early 1920s. I was listening to the Bloch *Prélude* in a recording by the London String Quartet – I think it dates from the late 1920s or early 1930s. And it's just really, really special playing on that



As winner of BBC Young Musician, aged 16; and as royal wedding performer, aged 18



'The London String Quartet playing the Bloch in the 1920s or '30s is really special – I fell in love with the piece after hearing that'

play with as much character as possible. Often, by just playing beautifully, you are missing the actual music. But as long as there is a clear and strong message with your playing ...'

There's certainly a clear and strong message on Kanneh-Mason's latest disc, and he admits to a special fondness for the lost art of the perfectly pitched, expressive encore. He's arranged

recording, and I fell in love with the piece because of that. It works nicely with the Elgar Concerto, because that's exactly the kind of playing that Elgar would have been hearing when he wrote the piece. You can learn a lot from different recordings, and particularly from historical recordings.

'The most important thing is that you're communicating and saying something, and how you do that is going to be different for each player. Just playing beautifully is kind of boring. I want to

play with as much character as possible. Often, by just playing beautifully, you are missing the actual music. But as long as there is a clear and strong message with your playing ...'

these tuneful miniatures. It's not so common now. But they've got so much music in them and so much subtlety – they're pieces that have a very distinct character and mood. They can be just as special and rewarding to play or listen to as a whole sonata.'

To these ears, anyway, the two Bloch performances really stand out – really possess that quality of speaking volumes in a few eloquent minutes. It's surely no coincidence that they're not purely solo items. Kanneh-Mason is merely the cellist in the quartet that plays the *Prélude*; meanwhile 'Prayer' is his

own arrangement for violin and cello – performed here with his older brother Braimah, currently a fellow student at the RAM. Sheku has already spoken about his collaboration with Rattle, and his own fascination with what lies beneath the solo line in a concerto. He's starting to sound very like one of nature's chamber musicians – and in fact, when I meet him, his piano trio, with Braimah on the violin and their sister Isata on the piano, is due to perform at London's Wigmore Hall the following month. Collaboration, it turns out, is how he first made music in the family home in Mapperley Park, Nottingham; and it's what motivates him most strongly even now.



Kanneh-Mason with Rattle and the LSO during the Elgar recording sessions at Abbey Road Studios, London, November 2019

'I mean, it definitely wasn't our parents' plan for all of us to play,' he explains. 'They just really loved music, so they gave us the opportunity to have lessons and we all really enjoyed it. We had a piano in the house and Isata started having lessons and I guess we all saw her doing that and followed after. But it was never like we had to. I played lots of piano trios with my sister and brother – there's so much amazing repertoire, and you learn so much from playing in small ensembles that you certainly don't get from solo playing. That intense level of listening, and being spontaneous and responding to what someone else says in an intimate way. I love that. And you learn from each other's playing as well. It's always special playing with people you know really, really well.'

The sheer quantity of musicianship in this single, mutually supportive, family has generated astonishing results. Isata's first recording – a Clara Schumann anthology – was released in the summer: 'It ranks among the most charming and engaging debuts I can recall,' wrote Jeremy Nicholas in these pages. Now Braimah has joined his brother on disc. 'Braimah is very thoughtful in his playing, and I've learnt a lot from him,' says Sheku, one year his junior. 'When he listens to my playing he always says the perfect thing to help me improve it. Isata is similar in that way. She's very creative and it's nice playing with her because we can be very free and spontaneous. There's always a feeling of trust when we're playing together as a trio.' No sibling rivalry? 'No, it's not like that. We've always learnt from each other.'

'Piatigorsky's Dvořák second movement is one of my favourites. I love his sound. The unique flexibility of his timing is really cool'

The spirit of music as something shared, a source of mutual strength and growth, has also underpinned his involvement in Chineke!, the orchestra founded in 2015 by double bassist Chi-chi Nwanoku to give greater visibility to black and minority ethnic musicians in the UK. 'I think the main thing that I can do is inspire people to see classical music as something that they can also do,' says Kanneh-Mason. 'Because I think if you are a young black person, for example, you might find it difficult to imagine yourself as a classical musician because you would only rarely see someone who looks like yourself doing it. It's clearly no fault of the classical music world: I don't know a single musician who would give a black player fewer opportunities to get ahead in classical music. It's more about having the inspiration to do it. And seeing Chineke! performing at the highest level is important. There is no point showing diversity in classical music if it's not also at the highest level.'

And now he's off to Frankfurt; and then back to studying at the RAM with his teacher Hannah Roberts – intensely aware, despite the whirlwind around him, that his career is still so new that ... well, that he's only now starting to learn the Dvořák Concerto. Any favourite recordings? Kanneh-Mason pulls another surprise out of the bag. 'Yeah, Piatigorsky's second movement is one of my favourites. I just love his sound; and the unique flexibility of his timing, I think, is really cool. He plays a lot like Heifetz. A very fast vibrato, that kind of shimmers. The sound is always travelling in a certain way.' A cellist who tops the 21st-century pop charts, taking Heifetz, Piatigorsky and Beatrice Harrison as his inspiration? If that doesn't give you faith in the future, it's hard to imagine what will. **G**

Read our review of Kanneh-Mason's new disc in the February issue

PHOTOGRAPHY: BRIAN TARR, MATT FROST/ITV/SHUTTERSTOCK, DOMINIC NICHOLLS

DIVINE ART RECORDINGS GROUP
 INNOVATIVE | ECLECTIC | FASCINATING | INSPIRATIONAL

January Releases



ENGLISH PIANO TRIOS
Trio Anima Mundi
 Fabulous, Romantic and rare colourful trios by Warner, Ellicott, Boughton, Forrester and Coleridge-Taylor.
Divine Art dda 25158



"MISTRAL"
Various Artists
 Orchestral and chamber works by Jonathan Östlund, often called the modern-day Debussy. Impressionist magic.
Divine Art dda 25199



"ASTRAEA"
*Sofia Gubaidulina
 Vyacheslav Artyomov
 Viktor Suslin
 Miles Anderson*
 Unique improvisations for folk and traditional instruments
Metier msv 28595

FOR RELEASE ON 14 FEBRUARY:



RUSSIAN PIANO MUSIC, VOLUME 13: RACHMANINOV
Alfonso Soldano
 Including the First Sonata and Moments Musicaux. Superb readings!
Divine Art dda 25155



FRANZ SCHUBERT: STRING QUARTETS
Fitzwilliam String Quartet
 'Death and the Maiden' D.810 and D.804 in A minor on period instruments/gut strings
Divine Art dda 25197

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube
 Available at all good dealers and in both CD and HD, FLAC and mp3 download formats direct from
www.divineartrecords.com

Worldwide distribution by 



Right at home with his 'second family' - Joshua Bell is pictured with his Academy of St Martin in the Fields players a year ago

AN INSPIRATIONAL PARTNERSHIP

As the Academy of St Martin in the Field's Music Director since 2011, violinist Joshua Bell has been respecting tradition while also doing things a little differently – and the orchestra's 60th-anniversary celebrations are no exception, finds **Charlotte Gardner**

Life can be full of surprises – and so it has proved for Joshua Bell. As a budding violinist from Indiana who had grown up listening to the Academy of St Martin in the Fields' many recordings via public radio, he could never have imagined being Music Director of this venerable institution (its founder Sir Neville Marriner handed him the reins in 2011), let alone holding that position as it celebrates the 60th anniversary.

The story of Bell's first contact with the ASMF has become the stuff of legend. In 1986, newly signed to Decca, the just-turned 19-year-old found himself at Abbey Road Studios to record Mendelssohn and Bruch concertos, having been whisked over to London for a two-album baptism of fire (he had spent the three previous days recording 'Presenting Joshua Bell', a debut album of virtuoso bonbons). The orchestra

was, of course, the ASMF. 'We had no rehearsal at all,' Bell remembers. 'No concert. I'd never met Maestro Marriner. I was exhausted from recording this "Presenting" album, and basically I walked into the room with the red light already on and we started playing. Meanwhile, Marriner and the ASMF were cranking out a recording every week (OK, I exaggerate here slightly!), meaning he was an absolute pro: very relaxed, knowing just what was needed, and, of course, the orchestra sounded great. They were also very nice to me, so it was a generally positive experience even when I wasn't completely in my comfort zone. Still, I never would have thought at that moment that years later they would be my second family.'

But 'family' is very much what the orchestra is to him now, following a renewal of the relationship in the early 2000s, when Marriner began inviting him to play with them and to lead from



the chair; this then grew organically into an education on how to direct an orchestra. 'Being led from the chair really is their roots,' Bell points out. 'It was the way it started with Sir Neville before he moved to more conducting as he got older. I began by doing a lot with strings, with works such as Vivaldi's *The Four Seasons* and Tchaikovsky's *Souvenir de Florence*; then I added winds little by little, with works like the early Mozart symphonies; then it was about getting bigger and bigger, up to my first Beethoven symphony and Mendelssohn symphonies. And these days even with the big symphonies I'm always leading from my slightly elevated chair, which I enjoy so much.'

Bell's recording with the ASMF of Beethoven's Fourth and Seventh Symphonies is one of 60 CDs within a newly released anniversary box-set from Decca, which celebrates the orchestra's extensive recorded legacy. Given that Beethoven symphonies led from the chair are not all that common, what does this different approach lend to the overall effect? 'With that recording, I'm particularly proud of the Fourth Symphony,' he begins. 'I think we captured something very special. But in the Beethoven symphonies in general, the violins tend to have quite a lead role anyway, so this approach feels right. I've also now developed my own language for the players, where I'll play with the orchestra ninety per cent of the time, and then, for about ten per cent of the time, where the violin section has a more accompanying role and I feel I'll be slightly more useful with my hands, I'll let my desk partner Harvey de Souza lead. This in turn makes it quite effective when I rejoin the orchestra. Furthermore, this gets the whole orchestra engaged, because everyone has to

know every other part, and really understand the piece.' He continues: 'For instance, the principal cello is on the edge of the seat and leading like a concertmaster, and the violas are doing the same, then sometimes it's the oboe that's leading, and while this is something you see with *some* big orchestras (for instance, the Berlin Philharmonic move as one, and it's amazing), in general I find that a lot of the big and famous orchestras today – although they play fantastically – are looking at the stick but not engaging in the way I think they should.'

This sense of collective ownership and engagement is also

a key reason why Bell genuinely looks forward to rehearsals with the ASMF. 'The players will suggest things, which I love,' he explains. 'Some of them have a lot of experience with these

'Bowings and fingerings I suggest may not be the most logical, but can be refreshing and in the end more musically satisfying'

pieces, so when we're doing a symphony that's new to me but which they've done many times, they can tell me what's worked in the past. And as for what I can bring to them – coming to it from a non-orchestral point of view, I'll sometimes suggest bowings and fingerings which may not be the easiest or most logical, but which I hope can be refreshing for them and may in the end be more musically satisfying.' Warming to his theme, Bell continues: 'Another thing I can bring to their refinement and skill is the energy of life-or-death music-making, because whether you like or hate my playing, you can't criticise me for not putting every ounce of energy of my body and soul into what's going on.' And then there's the sense of spontaneity he injects into proceedings: 'I'll say, "OK, we've rehearsed this, but just be aware that in the concert it may not be exactly the same," and they're ready for that.'

I ask him whether it's true that during recording sessions many of the players crowd into the production room between takes, to listen back. 'Yes,' he confirms, 'especially the winds, because they have a lot of solos, but also the section players. They do want to hear how it's coming across, and how they can do better for the next take.' He is openly admiring of the orchestra's recorded legacy, which he refers to as 'unmatched': 'There was some joke that "Neville Marriner and the Academy of St Martin in the Fields" was heard so many times on the radio, all joined up, that people thought that was the orchestra's actual name!' he recalls, with a laugh. 'What I love about Marriner's recordings is that they never feel contrived. Nothing is over-phrased or overdone to make a point. I always felt he found the tempos that make sense – there was no trying to find some metronome marking from some historical book and then doing it for that reason. It was always just solid, great music-making, allowing the orchestra to use their musical instincts, and this is an attitude they still have.'

'They play Piazzolla with such abandon and great style that they're unrecognisable as the orchestra who've just played Bach'

We discuss the anniversary tour, which began in November, and there are two programmes in particular that jump out for Bell. The first is a strings programme they're bringing to Edinburgh's Usher Hall and London's Cadogan Hall in January. 'It's one which really shows the players' versatility,' he explains. 'We begin by showing their Baroque sensibilities with a Bach violin concerto, after which we do the orchestral version of Schubert's *Death and the Maiden* Quartet, showing their chamber-music skills. Then in the second half we do Bach's *Brandenburg Concerto* No 3, but end in a whole other style with Leonid Desyatnikov's arrangement of Piazzolla's *Four Seasons of Buenos Aires*. There's probably a great British expression for this, but when they play that Piazzolla you don't recognise them as the orchestra who have just played Bach, because they play it with such abandon, as well as with great style. It's one we're going to record sometime soon, because we've done it many times now.'

Then there's the US part of the tour, which begins in February. 'I'm really excited about this,' he enthuses. 'For one, I'm doing Paganini's Violin Concerto No 1, which is a piece that I love. It needs to be played with an elegance that the orchestra will do really well, and it's one that has been relegated from seasoned musicians to young prodigies. Indeed, I haven't done it myself since I was 16. Then, what I'm most looking forward to is the second half, because I'm leading Brahms's Fourth Symphony from the chair for the first time. Of all his symphonies, I feel that the Fourth works best done in this way.'

As for what the future holds for Bell and the ASMF, there's a list of ambitious initiatives up the violinist-conductor's sleeve, beginning with ideas for new commissions. 'Of course, we've been doing new music all along,' he offers, as a caveat,



The late Sir Neville Marriner instilled an attitude of solid, great and instinctual music-making in the ASMF players

'and our anniversary celebrations have included the premiere of a work by our composer-in-residence, Sally Beamish – but it's something I want to do more of.' Bell is also keen for the orchestra to establish new partnerships, artistically and educationally. 'I would like to team up with ensembles around the world and further develop engaging, educational relationships with young people on top of our existing partnerships with Southbank Sinfonia, Guildhall School of Music and Drama and the Royal Northern College of Music. We're still exploring ideas, but I think it's really important to give back to the next generation.'

As for how long Bell will stay with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields – it was announced in November that his contract as Music Director has been extended until 2023. But he is keen to keep working with them 'for as long as they'll have me!' he says, adding: 'I won't make 52 years like Sir Neville – but I can shoot for second place!' **G**

The Academy of St Martin in the Fields' 60th anniversary box-set is out in January. They tour the US with Joshua Bell from February 15 to March 4; for the full list of concert dates visit asmf.org



Bell genuinely looks forward to rehearsals with the Academy of St Martin in the Fields



WIGMORE HALL

Beethoven 250 Celebrations

Wigmore Hall's exploration of the great composer's timeless art continues in 2020, revealing fresh insights into his instrumental and chamber works with some of the world's best classical performers.

Piano Sonatas
JONATHAN BISS

String Quartets
BELCEA QUARTET

Violin Sonatas
JAMES EHNES and
ANDREW ARMSTRONG

Piano Trios
TRIO SHAHAM EREZ WALLFISCH

Variations
CÉDRIC TIBERGHEN

Beethoven
250

Tickets available from £18



Supported using public funding by
**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



Registered with
**FUNDRAISING
REGULATOR**

Box Office: 020 7935 2141
wigmore-hall.org.uk/beethoven250

GRAMOPHONE

Editor's Choice



Every issue, Gramophone's Editor's Choices highlight the most exciting and important new releases. Explore here a selection of the most thrilling music-making of the past year

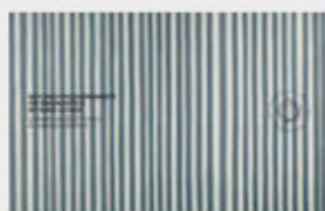


BARTÓK 'Racines'
Florent Boffard *pf*

Mirare
French pianist Florent Boffard here offers us a fascinating and beautifully

thought-through album featuring performances of solo piano music by Bartók, impressively textured throughout and rich in personality.

► **REVIEWED IN JANUARY 2019**



BEETHOVEN
Complete
Piano Concertos
Mitsuko Uchida *pf*
Berlin Philharmonic

Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

Berliner Philharmoniker

The names of such stylish artists as Sir Simon Rattle and Mitsuko Uchida grab one's attention before you even press play – promise which is more than fulfilled here.

► **REVIEWED IN MARCH 2019**



PROKOFIEV
Piano Sonatas
Nos 1 & 2
Lukas Geniušas *pf*

Mirare
The beginning of a promised survey of

Prokofiev's piano sonatas – and what a start. Lukas Geniušas is a truly playful story-teller, his range of expression compelling throughout.

► **REVIEWED IN APRIL 2019**



'THE SCENE OF THE CRIME'
Håkan Hardenberger *tpt*
Colin Currie *perc*

Colin Currie Records
An inspired coupling –

trumpet and percussion, that is, and specifically Håkan Hardenberger and Colin Currie – in which poetry and lyricism are wonderfully to the fore.

► **REVIEWED IN JANUARY 2019**



BAX. COHEN
'Private Passions'
Mark Bebbington *pf*
Somm Céleste
Mark Bebbington's musical journeys are always

fascinating – this time he pairs Arnold Bax with some recently discovered pieces by Harriet Cohen, in performances that are full of poetry.

► **REVIEWED IN APRIL 2019**



SCHUBERT
'Heimweh'
Anna Lucia Richter *sop*
Gerold Huber *pf*
Pentatone
There's something movingly

communicative about soprano Anna Lucia Richter's Schubert-singing, all impeccably performed, and with a strong sense of humanity and engagement.

► **REVIEWED IN MAY 2019**



LISZT Sardanapalo
Sols; Weimar Staatskapelle / Kirill Karabits
Audite
Rarely do musical discoveries come as significant

and intriguing as an opera by Liszt; a tantalising hint of what might have been, had the composer fully embraced the genre.

► **REVIEWED IN FEBRUARY 2019**



'INFLUENCES'
Tamara Stefanovich *pf*
Pentatone
An intriguing programme of three 20th century

works by Bartók, Ives and Messiaen, plus Bach, brilliantly presented by Tamara Stefanovich – elegant, thoughtful, and beautifully recorded.

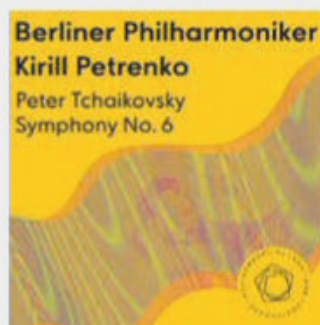
► **REVIEWED IN APRIL 2019**



BUXTEHUDE
Membra Jesu nostri
Ricercar Consort / Philippe Pierlot
Mirare
Voices of rich brilliance and moving

personality, captured perfectly in a vivid recording: a poignant performance of Buxtehude's reflections on the body of Christ.

► **REVIEWED IN JULY 2019**



TCHAIKOVSKY
Symphony No 6,
'Pathétique'
**Berlin Philharmonic
Orchestra /
Kirill Petrenko**
Berliner
Philharmoniker

A *Pathétique* full of richly crafted orchestral colour, which leaves one full of anticipation of what the partnership between Petrenko and the Berlin Philharmonic holds in store.

► **REVIEWED IN JULY 2019**



HOWELLS An
English Mass.
Cello Concerto
Guy Johnston *vc*
**Choir of King's
College, Cambridge
/ Stephen Cleobury**
King's College,

Cambridge

From the moving Mass to the poignant (and newly completed) Cello Concerto, this is an engrossing feast of Howells.

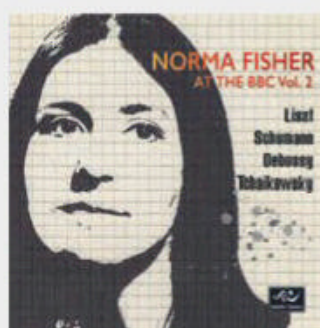
► **REVIEWED IN AUGUST 2019**



BLOW. PURCELL
'Elegy'
Iestyn Davies,
James Hall
countertens
**The King's Consort
/ Robert King**
Vivat

There are few more consistently brilliant countenors then Iestyn Davies, joined here by a recent One to Watch, James Hall.

► **REVIEWED IN AWARDS 2019**



**'NORMA FISHER
AT THE BBC,
VOL 2'**
Norma Fisher *pf*
Sonetto Classics
Volume
two of the
early recordings

of renowned teacher Norma Fisher once again reveals her to be a pianist of incredible insight, with playing that exudes colour and poetic finesse.

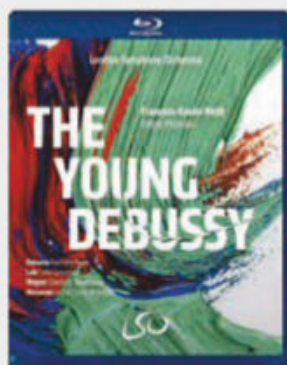
► **REVIEWED IN NOVEMBER 2019**



WAGNER
Siegfried
Sols; Hallé
**Orchestra /
Sir Mark Elder**
Hallé
The focused
drama of this

Siegfried, concluding Mark Elder's Hallé *Ring*, makes for a gripping listening experience, the cast collectively bringing strong characterisation to their roles.

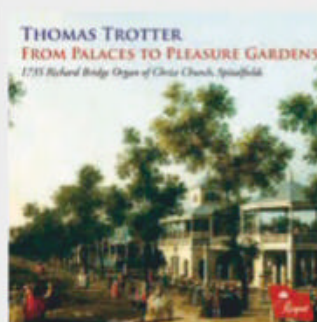
► **REVIEWED IN JULY 2019**



**'THE YOUNG
DEBUSSY'**
Edgar Moreau *vc*
**London Symphony
Orchestra / François-
Xavier Roth**
LSO Live
The superb
musician François-

Xavier Roth's first concert as principal guest conductor of the London Symphony Orchestra captured for film.

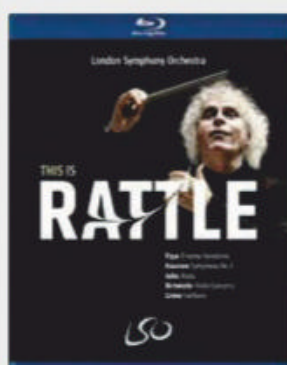
► **REVIEWED IN SEPTEMBER 2019**



**'FROM PALACES
TO PLEASURE
GARDENS'**
Thomas Trotter *org*
Regent
A richly
rewarding insight
into Georgian

London's musical life and the diverse role the organ played in it, and a celebration of Christ Church Spitalfield's organ.

► **REVIEWED IN AWARDS 2019**



'THIS IS RATTLE'
**London Symphony
Orchestra / Sir Simon
Rattle**
LSO Live
The beginning of
Sir Simon Rattle's
tenure as the

London Symphony Orchestra's Music Director, captured on film, bodes impressively well for the years ahead for Londoners.

► **REVIEWED IN NOVEMBER 2019**



**HAYDN.
MOZART**
Keyboard Sonatas
Jérôme Hantaï *fp*
Mirare
Revealing
a complete
command of

this delightful sounding instrument and what it can bring to these sonatas, this is an album of thoughtful, elegant and compelling playing by Jérôme Hantaï.

► **REVIEWED IN AUGUST 2019**



MAHLER
Symphony No 4
Sofia Fomina *sop*
**London
Philharmonic
Orchestra /
Vladimir Jurowski**
LPO

Vladimir Jurowski brings real attention to detail, Mahler's ideas brought out with compelling clarity. Excellent playing throughout from the LPO.

► **REVIEWED IN SEPTEMBER 2019**



**GERSHWIN.
STRAVINSKY.
VARÈSE**
'Transatlantic'
**Cincinnati SO /
Louis Langrée**
Fanfare Cincinnati
The Cincinnati

Symphony are on sparkling form in these works, which include two versions, one from a new edition, of *An American in Paris*.

► **REVIEWED IN NOVEMBER 2019**

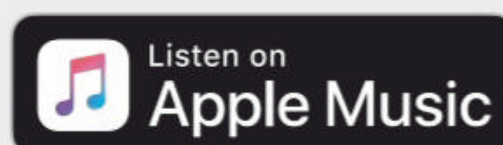


D SCARLATTI
Keyboard Sonatas,
Vol 6
Pierre Hantaï *hpd*
Mirare
To join Pierre
Hantaï on any
leg of his long-

standing and superb Scarlatti journey is to be shown joyful new sights, be introduced to delightful ideas, and ultimately offered a richly enjoyable listening experience.

► **REVIEWED IN DECEMBER 2019**

**Listen to Editor's Choice recordings and exclusive
Gramophone playlists, on Apple Music**



GRAMOPHONE

RECORDING OF THE MONTH

Michelle Assay finds Stephen Hough's approach to late Brahms revelatory, with its combination of imagination, sensitivity and colour, and its lack of self-indulgence



Brahms

'The Final Piano Pieces'

Piano Pieces – Op 116; Op 117; Op 118; Op 119

Stephen Hough *pf*

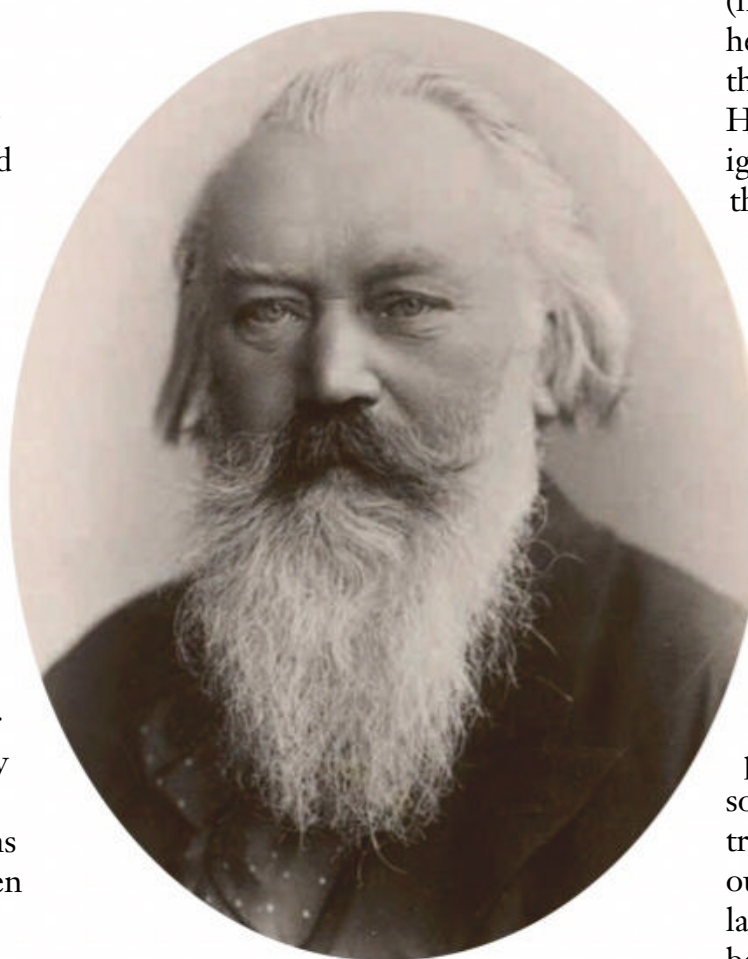
Hyperion © CDA68116 (69' • DDD)

Blend imaginative yet learned interpretation, profound sensitivity and poetry, and personal charisma, and you have here one of the finest accounts of Brahms's late piano works on record, one that stands head and shoulders above most contenders in an ever-growing catalogue. I always revel in the prospect of a new disc by Stephen Hough. The superlative piano-playing aside, the whole presentation is so thoughtful: the choice of cover illustration, the imaginative programming (remember his Janáček and Scriabin pairing) and his essays or booklet contributions. In this case the booklet notes are largely a reprint of Misha Donat's text for Hyperion's previous recording with Garrick Ohlsson but they are crowned by a short yet highly charged note from Hough. And the quietly evocative atmosphere of Vilhelm Hammershøi's painting on the cover sets the scene for what is inside. So much to enjoy, even before hearing a note.

The picture and Hough's words are key to understanding his approach to these so often played works, though admittedly his ravishing colouristic palette has no analogy in the shades of grey of Hammershøi's masterpiece. In much more eloquent words than mine, Hough comments on late style in general and how Brahms fits, or rather refuses to fit, with the clichés of mortality and decay, of a return to simplicity, transparency of texture and so on. Brahms transcends all these. His are intimate, even lonely creations, with autumnal but multicoloured emotional shades, ranging from the stirring outbursts of the three



'Hough reveals each miniature as a compact piece of theatre, putting an array of timbres and varied accentuation at its service'



Late Brahms conveys a profound sense of resignation

Capriccios of Op 116 to perhaps the closest music has come to depicting sunset, in the first Intermezzo of Op 119. Hough is supremely sensitive to the passage of time between these two opuses. What a journey he takes us on from the stormy, surging quality of much of Op 116, to the nostalgia that predominates in Op 119; it's as if the shadow of Schumann is gradually effaced as we travel between these works.

Hough reveals each miniature as a compact piece of theatre, putting an array of timbres and varied accentuation at its service. For him late Brahms is evidently not so much Prospero hanging up his magic garments as a compilation of many characters and soliloquys, and certainly much more than 'lullabies of his grief'. I wonder if Brahms would have regretted those words about his Op 117 Intermezzos (if indeed he ever actually said them) had he heard the self-indulgent sentimentality that bedevils so many modern recordings. Hough takes his cue rather from the often ignored *moderato* and *con moto* that qualify the *Andante* markings in the first and third of this set. As well-intentioned as some of the more conventional rival readings may be – Plowright (too plodding), Ohlsson (remarkably flat and two-dimensional) and even, dare I say, Volodos – Hough's noble and cleansing version (closer to the tempos of Kempff in 1963 than anyone else) makes it hard to go back to hearing these pieces that way.

Take the final Intermezzo of Op 118, for instance. How persuasively it grows out of the resignation of the preceding F major Romance, via its own solitary opening gesture, into a full-blown tragedy, culminating in an earth-shattering outcry of protest. Remembering this as the last piece I ever heard my own teacher play before her death, I have cried to many interpretations; but for me none has



Nobility and simplicity: Stephen Hough plays late Brahms with an affecting intimacy that gives the feeling of sitting beside him at the piano

reached the profundity of Hough's. Naturalness, nobility and simplicity in the face of apparent complexity are his main weapons. Compared to him, Volodos, for all the equal mastery of his pianism, feels theatrical and impersonal. You feel you are somehow sitting beside Hough's Brahms at the piano, being taken right inside the music; whereas Volodos is on a big stage where you can only marvel from afar.

The steely brightness of Hough's Yamaha in the more explosive numbers may raise some eyebrows. But hear how he turns it to his advantage in the G minor Ballade of Op 118, for instance, to create a three-dimensional soundscape. And hear how subtly his pedalling works with the acoustics of the room and the resonance of the instrument to make the richest of

textures as lean and suggestively meaningful as Hammershøi's painting. In his natural, unmannered freedom, Hough can be ranged alongside Radu Lupu (though the 1982 Decca recording quality cannot compare). Both join hands with the treasurable few Brahms recordings that have survived from Ilona Eibenschütz, friend of the composer who gave the private premieres of Op 118 and Op 119.

Michelle Assay

Selected comparison – coupled as above:

Kempff (1/93) (DG) 437 249-2GGA

Opp 116-118 – selected comparison:

Ohlsson (1/19) (HYPE) CDA68226




Opp 117 & 118 – selected comparison:

Volodos (6/17) (SONY) 88875 13019-2

Opp 117-119 – selected comparison:

Lupu (8/87) (DECC) 417 599-2DH

KEY TO SYMBOLS

Ⓕ	£10 and over	⤵	Download only
Ⓜ	£7.76 to £9.99	Ⓡ	Reissue
Ⓑ	£6.25 to £7.75	Ⓜ	Historic
Ⓢ	£6.24 and below (price per disc)	T	Text(s) included
②	Compact disc (number of discs in set)	t	translation(s) included
	SACD (Super Audio CD)	S	Synopsis included
	DVD Video	s	subtitles included
	Blu-ray	nla	no longer available
Ⓛ	LP	aas	all available separately
		oas	only available separately



Editor's Choice

Martin Cullingford's pick of the finest recordings reviewed in this issue

Orchestral



Jeremy Nicholas hears Liszt and Tchaikovsky from George Li:

'Where his peers are inclined to put on the brakes, Li surges onwards without losing the line, shape or clarity' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 48**



Charlotte Gardner on an album of Royal Fireworks from Alison Balsom:

'The album's real gold lies in the ravishingly soft and lyrical solemnity of the Telemann and the suppleness of the Purcell' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 51**

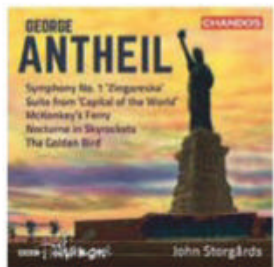
Antheil

'Orchestral Works, Vol 3'

Symphony No 1, 'Zingareska'. Capital of the World - Suite. The Golden Bird. McKonkey's Ferry. Nocturne in Skyrockets

BBC Philharmonic Orchestra / John Storgårds

Chandos © CHAN20080 (70' • DDD)



Antheil was barely into his twenties and studying with Ernest Bloch when he wrote his First Symphony (1923), which was meant to evoke the atmosphere of his childhood in small-town New Jersey. Although diffuse, the work shows Antheil's unique voice nearly fully formed. There are the sudden and frequent shifts of character and mood, a prominent feature in so much of his work. Also in evidence is his penchant for wearing his influences on his sleeve – in this case, the Stravinsky of *Petrushka* and *The Rite of Spring* – and, in the raucous 'ragtime' finale, his desire to portray himself as a 'bad boy of music' (the title he'd later give to his autobiography). But what's most remarkable, perhaps, is the conspicuous vein of pained, grieving nostalgia that runs throughout the work. The spare-textured slow movement (marked *Doloroso elevato*) is the most original by far, and really affecting – listen to the darkly ecstatic passage starting around 5'40" where the violins' high-lying, keening melody is swarmed by an avian cloud of flutes.

There's nothing nearly so imaginative or fresh in, say, *McKonkey's Ferry* (1948), an overture inspired by a painting Antheil viewed of George Washington crossing the Delaware River during the American Revolutionary War, nor is there anything remotely American about the music; it's merely a bombastic Shostakovich knock-off. The suite from the ballet *Capital of the World* (1953), on the other hand, is an absolute charmer. Based on the Hemingway short story *The Horns of the Bull*, about a waiter who dreams of being

a matador, it's one of the composer's most tuneful works, and for all its fiery Spanish flavour is often very delicately coloured. I only wish Storgårds gave us the full score rather than the suite, as Joseph Levine's pioneering recording was itself abridged and could use a sonic update.

The two shorter pieces also show Antheil at his best, and both are premiere recordings. *The Golden Bird* (1921) is a dazzling orchestration of a piano work clearly modelled on Stravinsky's *Rossignol* but with more acidic harmonies. *Nocturne in Skyrockets* (1951) has a richly nostalgic atmosphere vaguely reminiscent of the Symphony's, yet is considerably sweeter in tone, perhaps reflecting Antheil's many years working in Hollywood.

As with the previous instalments in this ongoing retrospective, the performances are superb and vividly recorded. Again, Storgårds is generally more incisive and emotionally generous than Hugh Wolff, whose Antheil series for CPO set a high bar. Enthusiastically recommended.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Capital of the World – selected comparison:

Ballet Tb Orch, Levine (7/55^R) (EMI) ▶ 695228-2

Capital of the World, McKonkey's Ferry –

selected comparison:

Frankfurt RSO, Wolff (7/05) (CPO) CPO777 040-2

Symphony No 1 – selected comparison:

Frankfurt RSO, Wolff (11/00) (CPO) CPO999 604-2

CPE Bach

Oboe Concertos - Wq164 H466; Wq165 H468.

Symphonies - Wq180 H655; Wq181 H656

Xenia Löffler ob

Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin / Georg Kallweit

Harmonia Mundi © HMM90 2601 (63' • DDD)



The oboe concertos – CPE Bach at his most amenable – get prime billing on the jewel case. Yet it's the two capriciously inventive symphonies from the mid-1750s that really grip the imagination here. These are far less

familiar than CPE's later sets of Hamburg symphonies, but hardly less subversive in their violently compacted opening movements. Mingling athletic precision and devil-may-care abandon, the Akademie für Alte Musik Berlin relish the music's seething energy and harmonic and dynamic shocks. Violins surge and spit frenetically against the glinting high-pitched horns. With discreetly balanced harpsichord support, CPE's characteristic repeated-note bass lines are lithe and propulsive, always enhancing the music's nervous vitality. The players are equally attuned to the soulful *Empfindsamkeit* of the slow movements, whether in the gently lilting *Andante* of the F major Symphony (Wq181) or the more disturbed *Largo* of the G major (Wq180).

With her mellow, rounded tone and subtle rhythmic sense, Xenia Löffler excels in the more gracious, 'normal' world of the oboe concertos, though as ever CPE cannot resist the odd disorientating hiatus or alien harmony. Löffler is all you could ask in this repertoire, phrasing and colouring with spontaneous flair, bringing a twinkling sense of fun (not a word readily associated with CPE) to the finales and a singing eloquence to the slow movements. The plaintive *Largo e mesto* of the B flat Concerto (Wq164) has a touching, fragile intimacy I've never heard equalled, with the strings matching Löffler all the way in sensitivity. I would have ideally liked the oboe less forwardly balanced vis-à-vis the orchestra. But that's a trifling reservation. The CD competition, especially in the symphonies, is sparse. Even if it weren't, I'd confidently recommend this disc to anyone attracted to CPE's quirkily fascinating art. **Richard Wigmore**

JS Bach

Violin Concertos - BWV1041; BWV1042;

BWV1052 (arr Wilfried Fischer/Kati Debretzeni); BWV1053 (arr Debretzeni)

Kati Debretzeni vn

English Baroque Soloists / John Eliot Gardiner

SDG © SDG732 (70' • DDD)



Audacious and courageous: Lars Vogt directs a hugely characterful account of Brahms's First Piano Concerto from the keyboard – see review on page 41



Kati Debretzeni has been a respected leader of ensembles such

as the English Baroque Soloists and the Orchestra of the Age of Enlightenment for nearly two decades, but despite her evident talent she has rarely stepped into the limelight as a concerto soloist. A neatly distinctive *Four Seasons* five years ago with the OAE (Signum, 7/14) showed what she could do, however, and now at last here she is in the Bach concertos that have surely been waiting for her. A Bach violin concerto disc can be defined by what is on it as much as by the performances, and here we get the two existing violin concertos, plus two reconstructions from the harpsichord concertos: BWV1052, long thought to have started life as a violin concerto; and BWV1053, a rarity in this context as it is usually reconstructed as an oboe concerto.

The sound is also an important factor here. Although the orchestra is 12-strong, it sounds somehow smaller, and, given

that the venue is St Jude's, Hampstead, there is a surprising lack of bloom. Debretzeni herself is heard quite close to, and although she passes the tests of smooth technique that poses, some listeners may feel that things are not as comfortable on the ear as they might like. Yet there are gains, the foremost being the kind of textural clarity that help any Bach performance. Add to that John Eliot Gardiner's typically firm-handed elucidatory approach to articulation and the result is music-making full of detail and interest. The closeness of the sound also generates a winning sense of intimacy with the performances that complements Gardiner's description of the music as 'like a passionate conversation between friends'.

Debretzeni's own character is engaging, whether bright and chipper in the first movement of BWV1041, intense but unsentimental in the slow movement of BWV1042 or joyously relishing the chance to run around in BWV1053 (the reconstruction is her own). Between them she and Gardiner also conjure as thrillingly dramatic a vision of the demonic BWV1052 as you could wish for. **Lindsay Kemp**

Bartók

'Orchestral Works, Vol 1'

Concerto for Orchestra, Sz116.

Suite No 1, Op 3 Sz31

BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra /

Thomas Dausgaard

Onyx © ONYX4210 (78' • DDD)



The BBC Scottish Symphony Orchestra under chief conductor Thomas Dausgaard

launch a series coupling contrasting works by Bartók, this first instalment presenting the ever-popular late Concerto for Orchestra alongside the First Suite from four decades earlier. Commonalities include allusions to Hungarian folk styles (overt in the suite, utterly assimilated in the concerto), five-movement form and an innate mastery of orchestration, the explicitly Straussian accent of the early work absorbed and obliterated by the fully mature style of the late one.

The First Suite is in fact a heftier work than its title might suggest, decked in orchestral colours that wouldn't shame Hollywood. The BBC Scottish play it for

all its worth, apparently in the first recording of the unrevised (uncut) version; woodwinds are especially characterful in their impersonations of indigenous Hungarian instruments. The bristling *Nachtmusik* of the second movement finds its echo in the central panel of the Concerto, where again the woodwinds play starring roles, albeit alongside all the other sections and voices within the orchestra.

Dausgaard pays acute attention to Bartók's markings, accentuating the seriousness of the Concerto's opening movement and the cheekiness of the *Giuoco delle coppie*, with its parade of instrumental duets. The *Elegia* builds to a notable peak of unease, while in the *Intermezzo interrotto* Dausgaard is careful not to overindulge the string chorale or the brass's slurs on Shostakovich's character. Only the finale perhaps hangs fire: two *echt* Hungarian versions I recommended in the *Gramophone* Collection in April 2010 (listed below) shave 20 or more seconds from Dausgaard's time and distil a greater edge-of-seat thrill from music which after all benefits from actually sounding difficult. Nevertheless, Dausgaard's care with both works pays off and augurs well for subsequent volumes.

David Threasher

Concerto for Orchestra – selected comparisons:

Gustav Mahler Jugendorch, Eötvös

(9/02) (BMC) BMCCD058

Budapest Fest Orch, I Fischer (12/05) (PHIL) 476 7255CC

Beethoven

Violin Concerto, Op 61^a. Septet, Op 20^b.

National Airs with Variations^c: Op 105 –

No 3, Air autrichien; Op 107 – No 1, Air

tirolien; No 2, Air écossais; No 6, Air

écossais; No 7, Air russe

Leonidas Kavakos *vn*^a/*cond*

^c**Enrico Pace** *pf*^b *members of the*

^a**Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra**

Sony Classical (E) (two discs for the price of one)

19075 92988-2 (114' • DDD)



These recordings of Beethoven's Violin Concerto and Septet were made in 2019

during Leonidas Kavakos's tenure as artist-in-residence with the Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra. His performance of the Concerto is striking on several counts. To start with, he conducts from the violin, which is no longer such a novelty, really, except that here he employs a full string section – and, indeed, from its sonority to its pacing, his interpretation is conceived on a fairly grand scale. He's also supplied his own elaborate and quite dramatic cadenzas,

based on those Beethoven composed for the piano concerto arrangement (Op 61*a*).

Kavakos's playing is articulate, deeply expressive and tonally ravishing, even in the most exposed, high-lying passages. The BRSO are with him every step of the way, and that's particularly impressive given that the violinist takes an unusually supple approach to tempo, italicising nearly every significant harmonic shift, and often slowing to savour the surprise. It's all unfailingly musical, but it does make the first movement, in particular, feel episodic. The *Larghetto* is taken quite slowly but is beautifully sustained, even if Kavakos sometimes stretches the music nearly to its breaking point. One has only to listen to the first few minutes to hear how heart-stoppingly beautiful his playing – and the BRSO's – can be. I find his flashy cadenza linking the slow movement with the finale more than a bit jarring, and then the rondo itself a bit too studied; after such raptness, one really wants a breath of fresh air. And I do wonder if some of the conspicuous extended breaths and emphases he indulges in throughout the score are less interpretative choices and more the result of conducting while playing and needing to show the orchestra where the beat should fall.

I have absolutely no nits to pick in the Septet, however; it's a glorious account full of incident and humour, and played with burnished tone and rhythmic élan. The gentle swaying motion six musicians from the BRSO (with Kavakos taking the violin part) give the *Adagio cantabile* makes it almost a barcarolle – and a magical one, at that. Equally memorable is the fourth movement, a set of theme and variations that in some performances can feel formulaic in its figuration but is so vividly characterised that here it becomes one of the work's high points.

The programme closes with five of the 16 sets of folk tune variations Beethoven composed in 1818-19 on commission from a Scottish publisher. Meant for household use by amateurs, they're unassuming but still offer enough subtle felicities to merit attentive listening, and are charmingly played by Kavakos and pianist Enrico Pace.

Andrew Farach-Colton

Beethoven

Egmont – incidental music, Op 84^a.

Leonore – Act 2, Introduction, WoO2b.

Leonore Prohaska, WoO96 – Funeral March.

Six Minuets, WoO10 (reconstr Beyer). Tarpeja,

WoO2 – Triumphal March

^a**Kaisa Ranta** *sop* ^a**Matti Salminen** *bass*

Turku Philharmonic Orchestra / Leif Segerstam

Naxos (B) 8 573956 (74' • DDD • T/t)

Beethoven

Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op 43

Turku Philharmonic Orchestra / Leif Segerstam

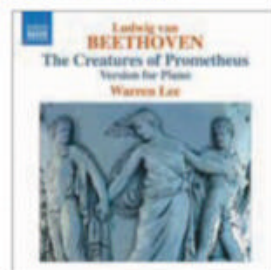
Naxos (B) 8 573853 (77' • DDD)

Beethoven

Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op 43

Warren Lee *pf*

Naxos (B) 8 573974 (68' • DDD)



The 'Beethoven 2020' compilers at DG have made a left-field choice in their

inclusion of the *Egmont* music from Claudio Abbado's 1995 New Year's Eve concert in Berlin rather than the classic VPO/Szell recording. Bruno Ganz catches the right tone of noble fury in the Melodrama but elsewhere his part is cut to ribbons. When he devised his narrative condensation of Goethe's text, Friedrich Mosengeil envisaged it in the character of declamation pieces for listeners familiar with the play, 'and who are therefore satisfied with a sketch for the living evocation of the main moments'. Beethoven's entr'actes only tell a story if we know what that story is in the first place.

Quite why Franz Grillparzer was prevailed upon to make a partial revision of Mosengeil's text remains open to question – the heavy hand of Vienna's censors may be responsible as much as any aesthetic impetus – but this is the version recorded by Matti Salminen and Leif Segerstam. Grillparzer and Salminen certainly set the scene of 16th-century Brussels more dramatically than either Mosengeil's doggerel or Segerstam's battleship-grey account of the Overture. Kaisa Ranta invokes Leonore in her pair of songs and the entr'actes smoulder rather than blaze (as they do under Szell or Aapo Hakkinen – Ondine, A/19), weighted with iron (like Salminen's voice) by Segerstam's pacing and the bass-heavy recording.

Where Segerstam's grand manner comes into its own is in some tantalising fragments of Beethoven in ceremonial and elegiac vein, including an abandoned prelude to the second act of *Leonore* and his orchestration of the 'funeral march on

the death of a hero' within the Piano Sonata Op 26. Naxos is to be commended for including the full text and translation of *Egmont*, as well as recording Franz Beyer's orchestral reconstruction of the Six Minuets, WoO10, whereas other 'complete Beethoven' labels have made do with Beethoven's piano reductions. The minuets date from 1796 and are no more trivial for being light music than Mozart's late sets of German dances.

Segerstam leads nicely pointed accounts of the minuets, the second of them familiar to any viewer of *Fawlty Towers*. He cultivates an unfashionably rounded sonority from the strings of the Turku Philharmonic, but the songful ease and elegant phrasing of his dance-music conducting here and in the complete *Creatures of Prometheus* may confound some expectations. The solo harp and cello number in Act 2 is beautifully done; and anyone who does not require the panoply of period sonorities on offer from, say, Armonia Atenea (Decca, A/14) will find no cause for complaint.

Warren Lee is a young Hong Kong-based pianist who talks engagingly on a promotional video about the composer's transcription of the complete *Prometheus* score; the booklet is silent on the matter. Unlike Brahms, however, Beethoven often undertook such jobs as little more than hackwork, an impression not countered by a close and unfavourable piano recording from Naxos. On a recent Heritage Records album (9/18), Leslie Howard made a considerably stronger case for the transcription as a work in its own right with a lighter touch and springy articulation.

Peter Quantrill

Beethoven

Symphonies – No 5, Op 67; No 6, 'Pastoral', Op 68

WDR Symphony Orchestra / Marek Janowski

Pentatone ④ PTC5186 809 (73' • DDD/DSD)



Beethoven represents the greatest challenge, said Marek Janowski in a recent interview:

quite a claim for an 80-year-old conductor with two recorded *Ring* cycles to his credit. But very little Beethoven.

You would never know it, to judge from the unassuming mastery of this Fifth Symphony. For all the energy pent up in its opening statements, aspects of his reading may strike you as at once straightforward and disconcerting, starting with the sweep through those statements into the second theme, moving on to the

absence of accents in the horns' restatement of the motto theme, or any pause at all until the oboe's soliloquy in the recapitulation. In a crowded field this must be among the most literal-minded readings on record – a compliment, so far as I'm concerned, to the musicians of the Cologne orchestra and their ability to play what's in front of them without a ghost of what Mahler meant when he dismissed tradition as laziness.

Here's Janowski again, in his own English, on recordings themselves: 'There is a terrible mixing up of an artificial product to put it in competition with a live going-on thing ... Recordings should be a means of informing people about a piece ... For me, personally, a recording never can be a piece.' Bearing this in mind may account for the apparent lack of drama at the start of the Scherzo, or jeopardy with the entry of the horns, yet also the discreet yet unmissably dissonant appoggiaturas in the clarinets. Even Mariss Jansons in Munich sounds exaggerated by comparison – and yet Janowski charges each phrase with tension in often unexpected ways. The Cologne cellos and basses leap into the Trio with a greater sense of purpose than the Bavarian players, joined before long by bassoons, always distinct from the strings; the 'March to the Scaffold' is not so distant. Just as novel in their way are the spread, plucked chords in the coda, like a nocturnal serenade. It's a completely literal treatment, while opening a door from Beethoven through to Tchaikovsky and Mahler.

Such transparency of texture may be unusual, even for modern recordings, and impossible to achieve in concert, yet it's authentically Beethovenian as a strategy of disconcertion. There is a dynamic range calibrated between *piano* and *forte*, with *fortissimo* reserved for points of crisis such as the 'Storm' of the *Pastoral*. This Sixth isn't quite so packed with quiet surprises as the Fifth but it's a striking exposition of the symphony's revolutionary tone-palette by any standards. I like the fractional breathing space between each initial phrase of the Scherzo – no more than a comma – and the punctuation of the cadence with the penultimate note of the bass part. You would expect by now for the Scotch snap on the clarinet to be tucked in without fuss, and it is (unlike the new VPO/Nelsons account, where it is inaudible – DG, 11/19). The expressive journeys of each symphony are left to look after themselves, and their effect on the listener is all the greater for it.

Peter Quantrill

Brahms

Piano Concerto No 1, Op 15^a.

Four Ballades, Op 10

Lars Vogt *pf*^a Royal Northern Sinfonia

Online ④ ODE1330-2 (72' • DDD)



For decades it's been fashionable for pianists, or pianist-conductors, to lead the

concertos of Mozart and Beethoven from the keyboard, the way they were ordinarily performed in the 18th and early 19th centuries. As the 19th century progressed, however, with the emergence of conductors such as Weber, Spontini and Spohr, not to mention increasingly complex orchestral scores, the discrete roles of soloist and conductor became entrenched. In most Romantic piano concertos, after all, pianists have their hands full, so to speak, and are only too happy to have someone else keep the band together.

Enter Lars Vogt and the Royal Northern Sinfonia, of which he has been music director since 2015, with the mighty Brahms D minor Concerto from 1858, in which Vogt is both soloist and conductor. The performance was captured over two days in late 2018 in the orchestra's home space, the Sage Gateshead concert hall. The music-making is nothing short of sensational.

This is a bold Brahms D minor with immense character, audacious and courageous. It is also perhaps the most sensitive and subtle reading of the score in recent memory. Tempos are spacious and rubato is ample, yet invariably organic. A wealth of seldom-heard orchestral detail emerges, with exquisite wind-playing especially prominent. Nothing is extraneous; every gesture seems bent towards maximum expressivity.

The opening onslaught of the *Maestoso* is terrifying in its fury, though it quickly becomes evident that this is but one of the movement's many intricate facets. The whole rests on the character and poise of a six-beat measure that, despite its firm footing, seems infinitely flexible and never far from the dance. The ensemble between soloist and orchestra is almost impossible to describe in its integration and subtlety. Synchrony doesn't enter the picture. Instead we hear an unimpeded outpouring of shared intent. The *Adagio* is without tears or monumentality, establishing from the beginning a quiet calm which serves as the *mise en scène* for a lyrical discourse of utmost tenderness. The Rondo has a convincing folk-like character of infectious

appeal. When all is said and done, you realise no one has overplayed. Rather than bursting at the seams, this is a D minor Concerto that is unfailingly proportionate, fresh and profoundly human.

The four Op 10 Ballades round out the recording, each imbued with a distinct character so apt that you're left wondering how so many interpreters have failed to grasp their telling details.

It's rare to have the pleasure of witnessing a musician mid-career growing by leaps and bounds. Lars Vogt has always been a pianist of remarkable gifts but over the years his artistry has risen in stature in ways one scarcely could have imagined. I suspect that this is Brahms you will treasure in the long term and I urge you not to miss it. **Patrick Rucker**

Bruckner

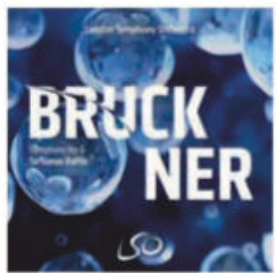
Symphony No 6 (ed Cohrs)

London Symphony Orchestra / Sir Simon Rattle

LSO Live (M) LSO0842 (56' • DDD/DSD)

Recorded live at the Barbican, London,

January 13 & 20, 2019



What a wonderful symphony this is, its mood not unlike that of some blustery day

in the high hills when storm clouds hurtle by without entirely disrupting the mingled sense of exhilaration and awe the day inspires. Yet is this, perhaps, a symphony that's easier for the listener to relish than for performers to realise?

The text itself hasn't been a problem since Robert Haas's 1935 edition tidied up such interventions as had existed. The most recent update, by Benjamin-Gunnar Cohrs, was published in 2016. And it's that which is used here in what purports to be its world-premiere recording. I say 'purports' because Cohrs was the textual consultant and booklet essayist for the festive revel of a performance that Roger Norrington recorded for Hänssler in Stuttgart in 2007.

Though text is not a problem, tempos can be, not least in the turbulent witches' brew of a finale. What Cohrs himself warns against is not speed but too many 'protractions' and tempo changes, citing with admiration Furtwängler's 1943 Berlin performance. That takes 12 minutes, the same as Norrington's; 13'30" is nearer the norm (Klemperer, Wand, Paavo Järvi) while Rattle, like Colin Davis on an earlier LSO Live recording, takes the best part of 15 minutes.

Too many protractions? Perhaps, though Rattle has as a defter touch than Davis,

both here and in a tender and finely nuanced account of the great slow movement. Donald Tovey instructed us to hear this movement with reverence. Yet does it need to be quite as slow as this? Furtwängler's profoundly reverent performance (and Klemperer's freer-moving one) suggest otherwise.

The Furtwängler broadcast lacks its first movement, making it a great Bruckner might-have-been. Not the least of its qualities is the superb sound quality, by which I mean not only the engineering (good as that is) but the marriage of high-quality analogue recording with a warm and sympathetic acoustic (the old Berlin Philharmonie), and orchestral playing whose sonic splendour and visceral drive simply beggar belief.

The Barbican, by contrast, is no place to record Bruckner, or so this somewhat thin and shallow-sounding recording seems to suggest. I also wonder about the production. Playback levels are not easy to set, even within the opening paragraph. What's more, the sound profile varies. Where the symphony ends in what can best be described as a raucous blare, a beautifully judged account of the third movement arrives in sound that is of virtually studio quality.

And then there's the question of musical continuity, of the conductor taking and holding a purposeful line throughout. Among the most compelling recorded Sixths, only the Klemperer is studio-made. The rest are both live and unobtrusively edited. I think especially of Wand in 1996 (his even finer 1988 recording is currently unavailable), Norrington and Paavo Järvi. His 2010 performance with the Frankfurt RSO, a highly experienced Bruckner ensemble, was rightly singled out by Christian Hoskins as being especially fine. **Richard Osborne**

Selected comparisons:

New Philh Orch, Klemperer

(9/65⁸) (EMI/WARN) 562621-2

N German RSO, Wand (10/96) (RCA) 09026 68452-2

LSO, C Davis (3/03) (LSO) LSO0022

Stuttgart RSO, Norrington (11/08) (HANS) CD93 219

Frankfurt RSO, P Järvi (A/15) (RCA) 88875 13124-2

Debussy

La damoiselle élue^a. *Marche écossaise sur un thème populaire*. *Nocturnes*^b. *Première Rapsodie*^c. *Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon* (orch C Matthews)

^aSophie Bevan *sop* ^aAnna Stéphany *mez*

^cSergio Castelló López *c/ab* ^{ab}Hallé Youth Choir;

^{ab}Hallé Choir; Hallé Orchestra / Sir Mark Elder
Hallé © CDHLL7552 (65' • DDD)

^bRecorded live at The Bridgewater Hall, Manchester, April 4, 2019



Mark Elder and the Hallé's Debussy recordings for the orchestra's own label

have, until now, been centred round Colin Matthews's transcriptions of the *Préludes*, undertaken at the Hallé's request between 2001 and 2006. This new disc is much more straightforward, though it does give us a further Matthews transcription in *Les soirs illuminés par l'ardeur du charbon*, Debussy's last piano piece, written in February 1917 for his musically minded coal merchant, in the hope that the latter would give him enough fuel to keep warm. The opening theme now drifts upwards in parallel clarinet thirds, while the central melody turns heady on divided strings. The original is arguably more bittersweet in mood, but like the *Préludes* transcriptions, this is both extremely beautiful and very fine.

The disc's main *raisons d'être*, however, are *Nocturnes* and *La damoiselle élue*. The former, recorded live, is particularly strong, with a real sense of desolation – 'a grey agony tinged with white', as Debussy put it – at the end of 'Nuages', and a genuine throb of excitement in 'Fêtes', where steady speeds allow the gaudy textures to register fully. Where some interpreters are apt to linger, Elder presses forwards in 'Sirènes', which is really seductive, with ravishing string- and woodwind-playing and exquisite singing from the sopranos and altos of the Hallé Choir and Youth Choir.

The choral singing similarly impresses in *La damoiselle élue*, particularly at the sudden, ecstatic surge of emotion as the choir contemplates the reunion in heaven of lovers separated on earth. The orchestral sound is very sensuous and transparent: you may prefer the darker Wagnerian resonance and greater gravitas of Abbado and the LSO here. Anna Stéphany is the detached *récitante*, Sophie Bevan the sorrowing Damozel, though, in order, one suspects, to emphasise her isolation, she's placed fractionally too far forwards. She drops some of her consonants, too, so it's a shame the accompanying booklet gives us neither the French text nor the equivalent lines from Rossetti's original poem.

Along with *Les soirs illuminés*, the fillers are the *Marche écossaise* and the clarinet *Rapsodie*, written in 1910 as a test piece for Conservatoire students. Fearsomely difficult for the soloist with its extreme range and constant shifts of tempo and mood, its challenges are impeccably met by the Hallé's principal clarinettist Sergio

RIGA JURMALA

MUSIC FESTIVAL

The Riga Jurmala Music Festival launches its new season!

Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra and Manfred Honeck,
Israel Philharmonic Orchestra and Lahav Shani, Philharmonia Orchestra
and Vladimir Ashkenazy and St. Petersburg Philharmonic and Yuri Temirkanov,
joined on stage by a stellar cast of today's classical music virtuosos!

20

concerts

4

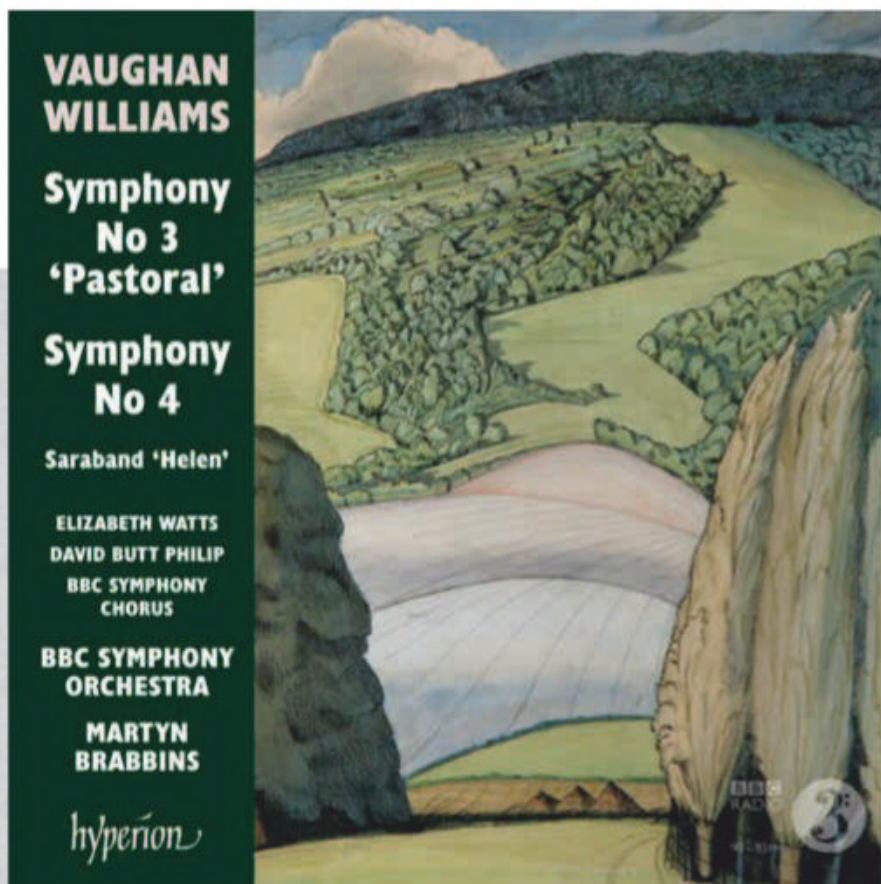
summer
weekends

RIGA
JUR
MALA

More information on purchasing tickets www.riga-jurmala.com.

Your guide to Riga!
www.LiveRiga.com

hyperion



Compelling performances of two very different Vaughan Williams symphonies, the complex visionary pantheism of the 'Pastoral' an ideal foil for the unbridled ferocity of No 4. Martyn Brabbins's own realization of the short choral 'Saraband—Helen' is a real discovery.

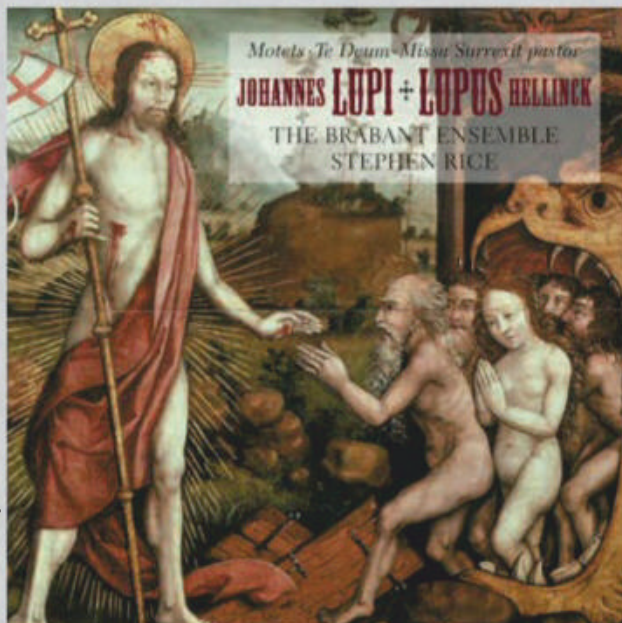
CDA68280
Available Friday 3 January 2020

Vaughan Williams: Symphonies Nos 3 & 4
BBC SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA, MARTYN BRABBINS conductor

Mining the rich seam of the Low Countries, Stephen Rice has once again unearthed sixteenth-century treasure.

CDA68304
Available Friday 3 January 2020

**Hellinck: Missa Surrexit pastor
Lupi: Te Deum & motets**
THE BRABANT ENSEMBLE
STEPHEN RICE conductor



A collection of exquisite Brahmsian miniatures: brief mediations on things final.

CDA68116
Available Friday 3 January 2020

**Brahms: The Final
Piano Pieces**
STEPHEN HOUGH piano



COMING SOON ...

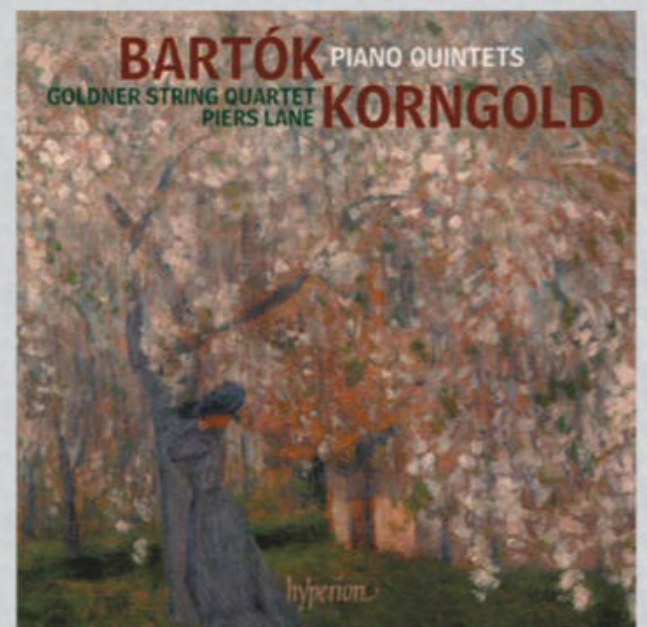
Prokofiev: Piano Sonatas Nos 6, 7 & 8 Steven Osborne (piano)
Dupont & Benoit: Piano Concertos Howard Shelley (piano), Sinfonieorchester St Gallen
Liszt: The Complete Songs, Vol. 6 Julia Kleiter (soprano), Julius Drake (piano)
Litolff: Piano Trios Nos 1 & 2 Leonore Piano Trio
Berlioz: Symphonie fantastique & other works Utah Symphony, Thierry Fischer (conductor)
Feinberg: Piano Sonatas Nos 1-6 Marc-André Hamelin (piano)
The Early Horn Ursula Paludan Monberg (horn), Arcangelo, Jonathan Cohen (conductor)



Youthful piano quintets from Korngold the arch-Romantic and Bartók in early pre-modernist vein.

CDA68290
Available Friday 3 January 2020

**Bartók & Korngold:
Piano Quintets**
PIERS LANE piano
GOLDNER STRING QUARTET



OTHER LABELS AVAILABLE FOR
DOWNLOAD ON OUR WEBSITE

signum
CLASSICS

HALLÉ
THE CHOIR OF
KING'S COLLEGE
Gimell

MARIINSKY
Collegium
REGIUM

CDs, MP3 and lossless downloads of all our recordings are
available from ***www.hyperion-records.co.uk***

HYPERION RECORDS LTD, PO BOX 25, LONDON SE9 1AX · info@hyperion-records.co.uk · TEL +44 (0)20 8318 1234

Castelló López. The *Marche*, meanwhile, though slight, has plenty of elegance and *joie de vivre*. It's all well worth hearing, *Nocturnes* above all. **Tim Ashley**

La damoiselle élue – selected comparison:

LSO, Abbado (3/88) (DG) 423 103-2GH

Dvořák • Khachaturian

Dvořák Violin Concerto, Op 53 B96

Khachaturian Violin Concerto

Rachel Barton Pine *vn*

Royal Scottish National Orchestra / Teddy Abrams

Avie Ⓢ AV2411 (73' • DDD)



I wasn't expecting Rachel Barton Pine to be such a persuasive advocate

for Khachaturian's much-maligned Violin Concerto. She's not a flashy player, and – let's face it – this is one of the flashiest of concertos. Instead, her success here comes from purely her musicianship, which is utterly unaffected. There are no virtuoso tricks, no swooping, swooning or mooning; she just plays it honestly. Yet unlike, say, James Ehnes (*Onyx*, 7/14), who takes a rather serious view, Pine seems to be having quite a lot of fun. The first movement is high-spirited, and she proves herself to be an expert storyteller, particularly in the expansive cadenza (she chooses David Oistrakh's extended solo over the composer's own), where she carries the narrative forwards with assurance without skimping on colourful detail. There's a *Sheherazade*-like character to her playing of the slow movement, too, with its easy balance of strength and vulnerability. Although her tone is more wiry than silky, she conveys an alluring intimacy – try starting around 8'10" for an especially moving example. And she handles the intricate figuration of the boisterous finale with aplomb, holding fast to the basic tempo while phrasing patiently in long, eloquently phrased paragraphs.

These same unimpeachable qualities imbue Pine's performance of Dvořák's A minor Concerto. I love how she emphasises the constant pull towards the lyrical in the opening *Allegro ma non troppo*, so that emphatic gestures nearly always seem to culminate inwards. This is, after all, how the movement itself ends, melting into the *Adagio ma non troppo*, and the violinist makes the transitional passage at 10'29" (marked *Quasi moderato*) memorably soulful. I do occasionally long for the tonal twang and rhythmic flair of the Czech Philharmonic under Ančerl in the classic

recording with Josef Suk (Supraphon, 5/62), especially in the rollicking finale, but in general the Royal Scottish National Orchestra play with rhythmic vitality and expressive warmth under Teddy Abrams's direction – and they dig into the Khachaturian with real gusto, too. Very warmly recommended. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Eller

Dawn. Night Calls. Twilight. White Night

Estonian National Symphony Orchestra /

Olari Elts

Ondine Ⓢ ODE1335-2 (59' • DDD)



Ondine's traversal of orchestral music by Heino Eller (1887-1970), in the company of Olari Elts with the Estonian National Symphony and having already seen fine new accounts of the Second Symphony and Violin Concerto (1/19), continues with this disc of symphonic poems.

His most significant orchestral work other than the three symphonies, *Night Calls* (1921) is a striking composite of Impressionist elements with the symphonic poem as evolved by French and Russian figures (most notably Liadov). Eller unfolds a sonata-form design more through motifs than themes, hence more by expressive inference than systematic development, though there is no lack of formal cohesion over a piece that conjures a nocturnal atmosphere beset by storm and sundry ominous forces with undeniable potency but also great delicacy of gesture.

If the symphonic suite *White Night* (1939) is less arresting, this is perhaps because its eight movements – attractive and frequently evocative in themselves – fail to merge into a greater or more cumulative whole. Yet the third ('Reminiscences') and fifth ('Fisherman's Song') are characteristic of Eller at his most imaginative, as too are those 'White Night' evocations framing this sequence. Ideal as encores or viable as an informal diptych, *Twilight* (1917) and *Dawn* (1918) are among Eller's earliest orchestral pieces and affecting in their Nordic sensibility.

These latter items have long been familiar through Neeme Järvi's Chandos recordings but the greater refinement of playing and sensitivity of Elts's readings are their own justification. Certainly no one coming to this music afresh will be disappointed by what is on offer here.

Richard Whitehouse

Twilight, Dawn – selected comparison:

SNO, N Järvi (10/87^R, 11/89^R) (CHAN) CHAN241-26

Haapanen

Compulsion Island^a. Flute Concerto^b.

Ladies' Room^c

^cHelena Juntunen *sop* ^bYuki Koyama *fl*

Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra /

^aHannu Lintu, ^bDima Slobodeniouk

Ondine Ⓢ ODE1307-2 (63' • DDD • T/t)

^{ab}Recorded live at the Helsinki Music Centre,

^aOctober 2016, ^bApril 2018



Among the most prominent of younger Finnish composers, Perttu

Haapanen (*b*1972) now has a substantial catalogue and this Ondine release offers an overview of his recent larger works. Reflecting his deep interest in Japanese anime, *Compulsion Island* (2014) evinces a cinematic perspective on what is essentially a concerto for orchestra, numerous solo instruments leaving their mark in the course of a piece whose texture and harmony are more than a little redolent of 1980s Lutosławski – for all that its abstract if often fraught scenario keeps one in suspense.

Not that *Ladies' Room* (2007) is much more explicit in this respect – the odd-numbered of its nine songs featuring texts stretching from Paul Celan, via contemporary Finnish writers, to an invoice of expenses incurred during witch-burning. These settings bring forth a wide range of expressive contrast that Helena Juntunen renders with real insight, but she cannot disguise the sparse invention of the 'Hommages à Adolf Wölfl' which act as interludes. Cliché-ridden and unamusing, they feel intent on caricaturing that Swiss schizophrenic of vast creative resource.

The Flute Concerto (2018) is the most successful of these pieces. Its near half-hour continuity, as divided into two parts, yields a three-movement trajectory. The first evolves from breathy undulation to sustained eloquence, the second frames a climactic *quasi cadenza* with more combative dialogue, then the third pivots between the capricious and the winsome before its deft final pay-off. Principal flautist of the FRSO, Yuki Koyama is wholly attuned to a piece written for him, with Dima Slobodeniouk assured in his direction. Sound and annotations are both up to Ondine's customary standards, so making for a firm if qualified recommendation.

Richard Whitehouse

Haydn

Symphonies – No 80; No 81.

Keyboard Concerto, HobXVIII:11^a

^aLucas Blondeel *fp*

Le Concert d'Anvers / Bart Van Reyn

Fuga Libera © FUG755 (62' • DDD)

'L'impatiente'

Haydn Symphony No 87 Gluck Orphée et Eurydice – Fortune ennemie^a Grétry Les mariages samnites – Ô sort! par tes noires fureurs^a Lemoyne Phèdre – Il va venir^a Ragué Symphony, Op 10 No 1 Sacchini Chimène, ou Le Cid – C'est votre bonté que j'implore^a Vogel Démophon – Âge d'or, ô bel âge^a

^aSophie Karthäuser *sop*

Le Concert de la Loge / Julien Chauvin *vn*

Aparté © AP210 (61' • DDD • T/t)

Haydn

Symphony No 99.

Harmoniemesse, HobXXII:14^a

^aMireille Asselin *sop* ^aCatherine Wyn-Rogers *mez*

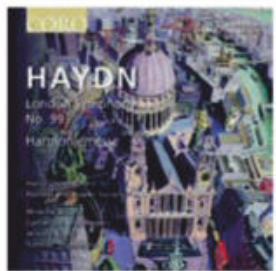
^aJeremy Budd *ten* ^aSumner Thompson *bar*

Handel and Haydn Society / Harry Christophers

Coro © COR16176 (68' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live at Symphony Hall, Boston,

January 25 & 27, 2019



Can it really be only four years since Haydn's Symphony No 81 finally appeared

in a period-instrument recording? And can this really now be the third such recording? Devotees of Haydn on disc have become used to the waiting game, with hopes of 'authentic' cycles kindled and then dashed on more than one occasion since their inauguration in the 1980s. 'Quite how the enlivening No 81 has escaped so many people's attention over the years is ... a considerable mystery', wrote Lindsay Kemp in March 2016. Quite how indeed.

Bart Van Reyn couples No 81 with its numerical predecessor (in its fourth period recording!) in performances by the Antwerp-based Le Concert d'Anvers. He marshals a well-disciplined band, let down only by a decided lack of second-half repeats (as provided by both Dantone and Antonini); on the other hand, he finds just about ideal tempos, even if Antonini's lilting siciliana is more persuasive in

No 81's *Andante*. In the finale he locates the sweet spot in between harried (Antonini) and flaccid (the classic Dorati). The strangeness of No 80 is not sold short but that missing reprise in the finale is regrettable. Between the two symphonies, Lucas Blondeel plays – with style and sensitivity – a perky copy of a 1795 Anton Walter fortepiano in the most popular of Haydn's keyboard concertos.

Julien Chauvin and Le Concert de la Loge have been working their way through the 'Paris' Symphonies – with a *Bear*, a *Hen* and a *Queen* so far – but now come to one of the three *sine nomine*, No 87 in A. Accordingly, they asked their audiences to choose an appropriate monicker; *L'impatiente* was the winner, a name this sinewy, nervy performance lives up to. Some textual details depart from the standard Philharmonia score (is a specifically French edition being used?) and the solo oboe is replaced by a flute in the Minuet's B section. These players are truly inside the music, though, even if the forces deployed are a touch meagre compared with those fielded by their 18th-century namesake organisation.

Symphony No 87 is contextualised with a Parisian symphony by the harpist Louis-Charles Ragué (see 'Haydn and the Harp' – Glossa, A/19) which offers a reasonable impersonation of Austrian *Sturm und Drang* but with tiresome repetition and sequence doing duty for proper development. In between, Sophie Karthäuser is the suitably dramatic soprano in arias by Sacchini, Gluck, Lemoyne, Vogel and Grétry. The milieu in which these figures worked and the connections between them are considered in a luxurious booklet, with ample annotations plus full sung texts and translations.

Having completed his survey of the 'Paris' Symphonies, Harry Christophers now crosses the Channel and alights on No 99, from Haydn's second visit to London. His approach to the symphonies with the venerable Handel and Haydn Society has emphasised the rich tone of his Boston-based orchestra, bearing a greater similarity, perhaps, to the suavity and urbanity of Colin Davis's Concertgebouw recordings than to the individualists and iconoclasts among his colleagues in the period-instrument movement. These performances never fail to give pleasure, though, and this is no exception, despite a ludicrously fast Minuet. The coupling here is Haydn's last Mass, the *Harmoniemesse*, once again characterised by fine playing, not least from the all-important woodwind. All the same, it retains the slightly earthbound feeling of a concert

performance (which, of course, it is): Haydn is reputed to have said that 'at the thought of God, my heart leaps for joy', and a crucial sense of awed wonder is more readily captured by the boys of St John's College, Cambridge, in their pioneering 1966 recording or, in digital sound, by the New York-based Trinity Choir and Rebel Baroque Orchestra under Jane Glover.

David Threasher

Symphonies Nos 80 & 81 – selected comparisons:

Accademia Bizantina, Dantone

(3/16) (DECC) 478 8837DH2 or 478 9604

Basel CO, Antonini (1/18) (ALPH) ALPHA676

Harmoniemesse – selected comparisons:

Ch of St John's Coll, Cambridge, ASMF, Guest

(12/66^R) (DECC) 478 7828DC8 or 483 1252

Trinity Ch, Rebel Baroque Orch, Glover

(NAXO) 8 572126 or 8 508009

Saint-Saëns

Symphonies – No 1, Op 2; in A.

Le carnaval des animaux

Utah Symphony Orchestra / Thierry Fischer

Hyperion © CDA68223 (82' • DDD)



Saint-Saëns was just 15 when he wrote his A major Symphony (1850), and while it's

not notably inventive, the workmanship is most impressive. He pays homage to Mozart in the first movement, borrowing the four-note motif from the *Jupiter* Symphony's finale, and – to the young composer's credit – goes his own way with it. The work overall has an easy-going, retro charm that puts me in mind of Schubert's early symphonies, and especially in such a deft and crisply articulated reading as this. The Utah Symphony have really blossomed under Thierry Fischer's direction and play with considerable finesse, particularly in the fleet, Mendelssohnian finale. Perhaps the *Larghetto* is a bit stodgy – Martinon's (EMI, 11/75) flows more naturally in a tempo that's just a hair faster – but its heart is in the right place.

Turning to the First Symphony (1853), one hears an enormous leap in artistic maturity. Its musical language may be conservative but its dramatic gestures are unexpectedly bold – and not only in the Berlioz-inspired sonic opulence of the finale, with its two tubas and four harps. Listen, for example, to the stretched-out cadence that marks the apex of the opening movement (starting at 6'15"), which sounds as if it's announcing a grand cadenza in a concerto or a sudden turn of events in an operatic scene. The expansive, rapturous

Adagio looks forwards a quarter-century to the sensuality of *Samson et Dalila* – the foreshadowing enhanced here by Fischer’s daringly slow tempo. Throughout the symphony, too, Saint-Saëns demonstrates his extraordinary gifts as a tunesmith – the melody of the *Marche-Scherzo*, with its subtle shifts of harmonic colour, has been stuck in my head for weeks now. Fischer doesn’t wring quite as much drama from the score as Martinon (EMI, 1/74), but he does convey real affection for this neglected gem, and Hyperion’s engineers reveal a wealth of exquisite orchestral detail.

I wish I could be as enthusiastic about Fischer’s interpretation of *Le carnaval des animaux*. A few movements are well-characterised – I like the way the strings drag dreamily behind the beat in ‘Tortoises’, say – but most are too punctilious for my taste. The kangaroos need to be bouncier, the swirl of ‘Aquarium’ is spoiled by an insistent emphasis on the crotchets, and ‘Fossils’ is oddly foursquare. A pity, as it’s the only misfire in Hyperion’s otherwise marvellous survey of the Saint-Saëns symphonies and assorted orchestral works (of which, I assume, this is the third and final instalment). If Fischer’s cycle doesn’t quite supplant Martinon’s now nearly 50-year-old set, it’s certainly worthy to stand alongside it. **Andrew Farach-Colton**

Schubert

Symphony No 9, ‘Great’, D944

Scottish Chamber Orchestra /

Maxim Emelyanychev

Linn ⑤ CKD619 (55’ • DDD)



David Zinman led the way; now here is Maxim Emelyanychev

waltzing through the ‘Great’ C major with all the repeats in less time than maestros of yore took to conduct roughly three-quarters of the same notes.

Not even Zinman in Zurich (Sony/BMG, 6/14) or Norrington in Stuttgart (Hänssler) set out on the second movement with Emelyanychev’s brisk clip, which resembles an *Allegretto* more than *Andante con moto*, no less in the airily floated second theme than the *alla marcia* first. In any case both older conductors point the phrasing, nudge and coax it into shape, with an affection to which the new account never once aspires.

In the mould of his *Eroica* from Nizhny-Novgorod (Aparté, 2/19), the orchestra is balanced upwards, cast loose from a

compact bass line that is too discreet for its own good at those many points in the symphony when we should feel the ground beneath our feet. The Scherzo’s Trio is especially disappointing in this regard: where are the smiles, the memories, the new wine and the tears that belong to every bar of this music?

The SCO’s violin section attacks the finale’s endless semiquavers with unflagging energy, and it’s an achievement of sorts for the all-important trio of trombones to play with the agility and delicacy of a flute section. Some measure of exhilaration enters the reading with the ‘Ode to Joy’ quotation and builds towards a conclusion of genuine elation, which old hands may think too little, too late. But if the symphony’s ‘heavenly lengths’ have left you cold in the past, Emelyanychev could be the man to banish your Schubertian blues. To the perennial debate over the accent or diminuendo on the last note he brings an ingenious solution, contriving both at once. His recordings with Il Pomo d’Oro demonstrate a musician of considerable flair and independent mind; as yet those qualities produce fitfully illuminating results in symphonic repertoire. **Peter Quantrill**

R Strauss

Don Juan, Op 20. Don Quixote, Op 35^a.

Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op 28

^aLouisa Tuck VC

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko

LAWO ⑤ LWC1184 (76’ • DDD)

R Strauss • Ravel

Ravel Boléro^a R Strauss Don Quixote^b

^bKian Soltani VC

West-Eastern Divan Orchestra / Daniel Barenboim

Peral ⑤ ➔ 483 7502 (56’ • DDD)

Recorded live at the Teatro Colón, Buenos Aires,

^aAugust 3, 2014; ^bAugust 7, 2017



I gave a warm welcome to the first instalment of Vasily Petrenko’s Strauss series with the Oslo Philharmonic (8/19), and the second album is, if anything, even finer. It showcases three of the composer’s most vividly pictorial works in performances shot through with the same sense of discovery and flexibility, and of conductor and orchestra thoroughly enjoying themselves.

For *Don Quixote* Petrenko follows the score’s lead in casting his orchestra’s

superb principal cello, Louisa Tuck, as the Knight. Her playing is beautifully integrated and superbly eloquent – the hush and tenderness of the final minutes is especially moving. Tuck’s interplay, too, with Catherine Bullock’s bumptious Sancho Panza is a delight; few recent recordings have been so satisfactory and eloquent in the dialogue of Variation 3.

But it’s largely Petrenko’s conviction that makes the performance so special, with no bar allowed simply to play itself, the music’s descriptiveness vividly but never doggedly conveyed; we feel Don Quixote’s misguided determination to throw himself into each delusional adventure, and we really sense the swirling power of his imagination – you’ll struggle not to get swept up in Var 7’s flight of fancy. There’s grandeur and sorrow, too, which intensifies the ultimate feeling of pathos in a rousing account of Var 10.

The couplings are outstanding, too. *Don Juan* bristles with energy and anticipation but Petrenko also brings subtlety and, as the piece progresses, a growing sense of our protagonist’s conscience catching up with him. *Till Eulenspiegel*, meanwhile, is remarkable not just for its sharply etched characterisation but also for the flexibility of the approach, Petrenko often allowing himself space and taking his time. With superb playing and excellent engineering, this is another highly recommended album in what’s turning into a very fine series.

By contrast, Daniel Barenboim’s new release on his Peral label is a disappointment. Brought out to celebrate 20 years of the West-Eastern Divan Orchestra, it hardly shows them at their best. The live recording of *Don Quixote* is marred by engineering that places Kian Soltani’s cello far too far forward – he dominates even in the grandest orchestral passages – and gives little sense of perspective and breadth.

Soltani’s playing is undoubtedly eloquent, and there are lovely contributions from violist Miriam Manasharov, but the persistence of the cello in the balance quickly becomes tiring. And while Barenboim’s conducting, as with his earlier Chicago recording (Elatus, 12/91), doesn’t do anything terribly wrong, it is strangely short on imagination and affection. It rarely feels, either, as though the orchestral playing adds up to more than the sum of its talented parts.

The *Boléro* coupling is rousing (complete with enthusiastic applause) and features some fine solo contributions but with undistinguished engineering, again,

doesn't have much to recommend it on its own terms. The album is available digitally only; don't expect any documentation.

Hugo Shirley

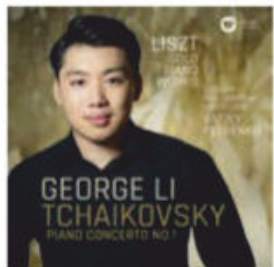
Tchaikovsky · Liszt

Liszt Les jeux d'eau à la Villa d'Este, S163 No 4. Réminiscences de Don Juan, S418. Sonetto 104 del Petrarca, S161 No 5 **Tchaikovsky** Piano Concerto No 1, Op 23^a

George Li *pf*^a **London Philharmonic Orchestra / Vasily Petrenko**

Warner Classics © 9029 53795-7 (65' • DDD)

^aRecorded live at the Royal Festival Hall, London, March 27, 2019



George Li's first disc for Warner Classics (10/17) was one which, with a few

reservations, I felt marked an impressive debut. This is its strange successor. Why the ubiquitous, over-recorded Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto followed by three solo works by Liszt? What kind of a programme is that?

Furthermore, I'm afraid this traversal of the B flat minor Concerto does not set the pulse racing, the tempo of the famous opening section being nearer to *Andante non troppo* (which was what the work's dedicatee von Bülow changed it to in this score) than the composer's *Allegro non troppo e molto maestoso*. There's a feeling, though surely unintended, of a task reluctantly undertaken. Only in the closing pages of the first movement does the performance truly catch fire.

The Liszt works are studio recordings made in Boston four months later. 'Jeux d'eau' and the Petrarch Sonnet 104 provoke the same reaction as the Tchaikovsky: fine but unremarkable. However, when we come to the *Réminiscences de Don Juan* it is a different story. Here is a mesmerising and masterly rendition out of the top drawer, with long phrases and cascading, scintillating filigree passagework. Disappointment turns to admiration. Li is thrilling, and in the many places where his peers are inclined to put on the brakes, he surges headlong onwards without losing the line, shape or clarity. He makes an unusual (but judicious) cut of c40 bars before the much longer 'ad libitum cut' suggested by Liszt, just before the final 'Champagne aria' section, which is played at a true *presto* and *scintillante*.

Still, the disc makes me wonder if Warner Classics have a coherent marketing strategy for their young star. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Vaughan Williams

Symphonies - No 3, 'Pastoral'; No 4.

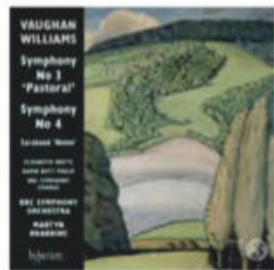
Saraband 'Helen'^b

^aElizabeth Watts *sop* ^bDavid Butt Philip *ten*

BBC Symphony Chorus and Orchestra /

Martyn Brabbins

Hyperion © CDA68280 (81' • DDD • T)



The rediscovery of Vaughan Williams's symphonies seems to be going from strength

to strength these days – and with Andrew Manze's recent cycle with the Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra and now Brabbins's cycle on Hyperion, one feels spoilt for choice. What is more, with the array of new interpretations becoming available, one senses more and more the towering stature of this extraordinary music and of Vaughan Williams's eminence as one of the 20th century's greatest symphonists.

One immediately feels Brabbins's special affinity for this music in the numinous pacing of the first movement of the *Pastoral* Symphony, which, inch by inch, moves towards its climax in the development. Besides the steady tempo, one is coaxed along by the gradual accumulation of weight as the brooding counterpoint of the composer's themes moves ominously on. The slow movement has a real sense of elegiac rumination and the solo trumpet cadenza, played at a distance, is unsettling as much as it is haunting. Anyone who has witnessed the landscape of Flanders will find this vivid *Stimmungsbild* disquieting. Brabbins and the Hyperion recording team bring a thrilling clarity to the heavier timbres of the Scherzo and the diaphanous, mercurial (even Holst-like) coda with its almost neoclassical fugal music and exhilarating scoring. But it is in the finale, with its unforgettable, benevolent wind chorale (and in this recording the invigorating climactic countermelody in horns and cellos in the recapitulation), and the anxious transformation of the solo soprano's wordless monody in the development that one feels the true pathos of this extraordinary work.

Brabbins's reading of the first movement of the Fourth Symphony has much of the familiar violence and ferocity that we know from this work, and one is unavoidably gripped by the B-A-C-H motif and the superimposition of fourths which adds so much to the language of this imposing canvas; but I was most moved by the space, shape and tone Brabbins gives to the lyrical second subject that then contrasts so vividly

with the mechanistic theme (so redolent of *Job*) which follows. Brabbins's attention to dynamic detail is also striking, both in the first movement (note the really hushed level of the development before the recapitulation really erupts) and the troubling demeanour of the slow movement. Again the demonic Scherzo has a clarity typified by the splendidly crisp bassoon- and string-playing from the BBC SO, and the sense of ensemble, engendered by the composer's fascination for counterpoint and fugue, is hugely energising, not least in the powerful transition that links the Scherzo to the last movement, the bracing 'oompah' of the last movement's opening march and the overwhelming density of the closing pages marked appropriately *epilogo fugato*.

Saraband 'Helen' (1913-14), which Brabbins has realised from the surviving draft vocal score, comes as a gentle, sonorous respite and a taste of that pre-war Vaughan Williams captured so powerfully in the *Five Mystical Songs* and *A London Symphony*. It is a heart-warming gem.

Jeremy Dibble

Vivaldi

'Vivaldi con amore'

Concertos - RV93; 'L'amoroso', RV271; RV481; RV534; RV553; RV564a; 'Amato bene', RV761.

Ottone in villa - Sinfonia

Tafelmusik Baroque Orchestra / Elisa Citterio

Tafelmusik Media © TMK1039CD (75' • DDD)



Beyond reissues, the Canadian period-instrument orchestra Tafelmusik have been

conspicuously quiet in the recordings domain in recent years, despite having been downright prolific and indeed highly acclaimed during the 1990s and early 2000s. However, here they are now with their first new recording since the violinist Elisa Citterio took over as music director in 2017: eight Vivaldi works, featuring just their 17 permanent players, which in the context of their last major recording project having been a Beethoven cycle feels like a conscious return to their Baroque roots.

It's a strong return, too. In general terms, the tempos all feel right, faster movements sounding upbeat but never breakneck, and slower movements given space to breathe but not enough to drag. Metrically, meanwhile, it's precise but also far from rigid-sounding, thanks to sensitively shaped and coloured phrases and inventive ornamentation. Then there's the determined beauty to their sweetly rich,

"Full of entertaining touches
and striking imagery."
— THE NEW YORK TIMES

"Nothing short of a
triumph on all fronts."
— CHICAGO TRIBUNE

Lyric
OPERA OF
CHICAGO

A NEW RING CYCLE

APRIL - MAY, 2020

SIR ANDREW DAVIS CONDUCTOR
SIR DAVID POUNTNEY DIRECTOR

LYRICOPERA.ORG/RING
(312) 827-5600

New Lyric production of the Ring Cycle generously made possible by Lead Sponsor Anonymous Donor and cosponsors Mr. & Mrs. Dietrich M. Gross, the Gamma Fisher Foundation of Marshalltown, Iowa, Stefan Edlis and Gael Neeson, Ada and Whitney Addington, Bulley & Andrews, and the National Endowment for the Arts, with additional support from Robin Angly, Richard J. and Barbara Franke, and the Prince Charitable Trusts.

Photo: Todd Rosenberg

Beethoven's Complete Symphonies with Sir John Eliot Gardiner

Enjoy an architectural and musical experience at Palau
de la Música in Barcelona with Orchestre Révolutionnaire
et Romantique.

Sunday, 9 February 2020

—*Symphony N° 1* and
The Creatures of Prometheus

Monday, 10 February 2020

—*Symphonies N° 2* and *3*

Tuesday, 11 February 2020

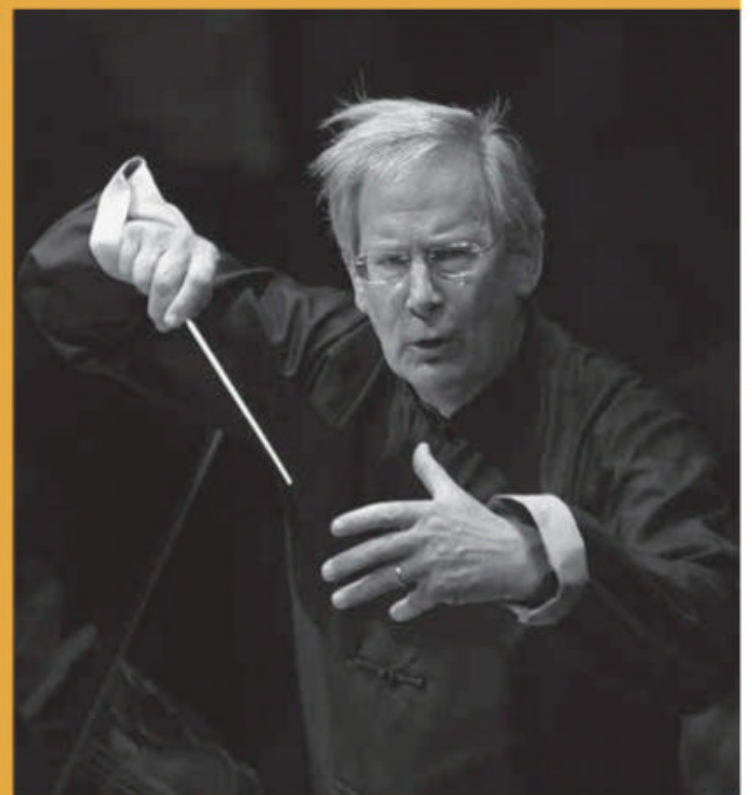
—*Symphonies N° 4* and *5*

Thursday, 13 February 2020

—*Symphonies N° 6* and *7*

Friday, 14 February 2020

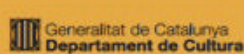
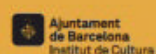
—*Symphonies N° 8* and *9*



PALAU
DE LA
MÚSICA
ORFEÓ
CATALÀ

Season subscriptions and individual tickets on sale at www.palaumusica.cat
Season subscription for Beethoven's Complete Symphonies from €112
More information at (+34) 93 295 72 07 | taquilles@palaumusica.cat

In collaboration with:



gently vibrating sound – where some bands will make a feature of their period instruments' slightly less couth tonal tendencies, this lot definitely prefer polish, and all the previously described precision and poetry comes wonderfully together for the opening nine bars of RV553 for four violins, where the solo quartet's triplet figures are superlatively fused together and exact, while also sounding as close to the natural chirruping of birds as I've yet heard them played.

The central slow movement of the D major Lute Concerto is also worth a mention. First because of soloist Lucas Harris's ornamentation: holding back initially, but on the repeats making it sumptuously ear-catching and amorous. Then also because of the light-textured, less-is-more poise of the accompanying texture: an interesting point of comparison here is the voluptuously soft, warm and rubato'd reading newly out from Thomas Dunford and his ensemble Jupiter (Alpha, see page 90), a sound world which in Baroque ceiling terms would represent soft-focus cherubs peeking from luxuriously spread clouds, against Tafelmusik's equally ornate but more crisply ordered gilt border. As for which I prefer, I honestly couldn't say.

The orchestra's woodwind equally get ample chance to show their many colours, with fine performances from the bassoonist Dominic Teresi in his RV481 concerto in D minor and oboists John Abberger and Marco Cera in their own two double oboe concertos. All in all, this is an attention-grabbing return to the recording studio.

Charlotte Gardner

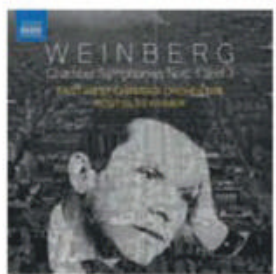
Weinberg

Chamber Symphonies –

No 1, Op 145; No 3, Op 151

East-West Chamber Orchestra / Rostislav Krimer

Naxos ® 8 574063 (58' • DDD)



From their opus numbers you would imagine that Weinberg's four chamber symphonies are late works. In fact the first three are recastings of string quartets from the 1940s, when the composer was in his twenties. No 1 is for the most part a lively, genial affair which, when heard in this expanded string-orchestral version, seems not so far from the world of Grieg's *Holberg Suite* or Tchaikovsky's *Serenade*; even when the language occasionally toughens up, the kinship is more with Bartók's *Divertimento*

than with Shostakovich's chamber music, which Weinberg had yet to encounter when he wrote the original quartet. If No 3 feels a lot darker and more profound, that may be precisely because the personal and artistic relationship with Shostakovich was by that time well under way (the original quartet version dates from 1945) and had been a decisive factor in shaping Weinberg's personal voice.

These, then, are two of Weinberg's most immediately approachable and engaging works, and they make an excellent introduction for newcomers to his output. Nor should anyone taking the economy option with this new Naxos disc feel short-changed. The East-West Chamber Orchestra fully lives up to its billing as the 'resident orchestra of the Yuri Bashmet International Music Festival ... made up of concert masters from leading orchestras and competition laureates'. And Rostislav Krimer has a fine instinct for both works, finding nuances and idiomatic expressive shades that are as persuasive in their way as the marginally more solid Kremerata Baltica. The latter squeeze three symphonies on to one disc, but at the expense of the repeated first-movement exposition of No 1. Given the neoclassical credentials of the piece, I'm inclined to regard this as a more than negligible loss. All the more reason, then, to make the modest outlay for the new disc and to look forward to its (presumed) follow-up with Chamber Symphonies Nos 2 and 4. The recording – made in Minsk, where Weinberg lived for two years and composed the quartet that eventually mutated into the First Chamber Symphony – is spacious but clear.

David Fanning

Selected comparison:

Kremerata Baltica, *Gražinytė-Tyla* (4/17) (ECM) 481 4604

'Origins'

Debussy Hommage à Haydn Dukas Prélude élégiaque Frances-Hoad Between the Skies, the River and the Hills. Stolen Rhythm Hahn Thème varié sur le nom de Haydn Haydn Piano Concerto, HobXVIII:11 d'Indy Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn, Op 65 Ravel Menuet sur le nom d'Haydn Traditional Kad ja počoh na Bentbašu Widor Fugue sur le nom d'Haydn

Ivana Gavrić pf

Southbank Sinfonia / Karin Hendrickson

Rubicon ® RCD1038 (64' • DDD)



Seven brief homages to Haydn form the centre of this programme: six

from 1909 by leading French composers of the day who were commemorating the centenary of Haydn's death, and a more recent tribute by Cheryl Frances-Hoad. Ivana Gavrić plays all these with clarity, supple grace and a finely shaded colour palette. But it's the pair of concertos that bookend the programme that are its true heart.

The disc opens with Haydn's D major Concerto, and in her booklet note the Sarajevo-born pianist explains how her connection with the work deepened when she read that the theme of the 'Rondo all'Ungarese' finale might actually be based on a Croatian or Bosnian folk melody. This idea led her to commission a new concerto from Frances-Hoad that would incorporate the unofficial anthem of her hometown, *Kad ja počoh na Bentbašu*. Compared with, say, Bavouzet (Chandos, 9/14) or Andsnes (EMI, 4/00), Gavrić's Haydn sounds rather bluntly phrased, and in the outer movements lacks both sparkle and vivacity, while the slow movement is overly cool. Significantly, perhaps, it's in Frances-Hoad's cadenzas that her playing seems to connect emotionally to the music (and, by the way, these concise cadenzas are extremely clever in the way they channel late Beethoven and thus create the same kind of wonderfully jarring stylistic leap that one hears in the cadenza Beethoven later added to his own B flat Concerto).

Frances-Hoad's substantial piano concerto takes its title, *Between the Skies, the River and the Hills*, and much of its inspiration from Ivo Andrić's Nobel Prize-winning novel *The Bridge Over the Drina*. The evocative opening movement often brings to mind Britten at his painterly best – listen starting around 4'00", where the music's powerful waves are made woozy by woodwind glissandos – while the central Scherzando has a caustic, Prokofiev-like bite. In the finale, marked *Lento lamentoso*, the folk melody that was essential to Gavrić's commission becomes the repeated bass line in a broad passacaglia; this gives solid structure to the movement while simultaneously conjuring an aural image of the tune wandering in search of its home.

The solo part is often quite spare, particularly in the first half of the finale, where it seems to go its own way until 8'32" when piano and orchestra suddenly come together – a stunning moment that packs an emotional punch, and that's eloquently projected here. Indeed, this is a gripping performance, thanks in large



Special affinity for Vaughan Williams: Martyn Brabbins and the BBC SO continue their outstanding survey of the symphonies - see review on page 48

part to Karin Hendrickson's sure and sensitive conducting of the Southbank Sinfonia. Despite my reservations about the Haydn, this is a most stimulating programme. Warmly recommended.

Andrew Farach-Colton

'Royal Fireworks'

JS Bach Cantata No 147 - Jesu bleibet meine Freude. Christmas Oratorio - Suite **Handel** Music for the Royal Fireworks, HWV351 **Purcell** Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary, Z860/58c. Sonata, Z850 **Telemann** Trumpet Concerto, TWV51:D7

Alison Balsom *tpt* **Balsom Ensemble**
Warner Classics © 9029 53700-6 (57' • DDD)



When the highlights of Alison Balsom's last album, 'Jubilo' (12/16), were its handful of works recorded not on a modern instrument but on the natural, valveless Baroque trumpet, it's good news indeed to have her now focusing entirely on it for this latest recording.

In terms of scale alone, the programme's main acts are new transcriptions by Simon Wright of Handel's *Music for the Royal Fireworks* and a suite from Bach's *Christmas Oratorio*, designed 'to elevate the natural trumpet and place it front and centre' by means of what sound like some fairly dramatic scoring decisions: Balsom joined brass-wise only by other natural trumpeters, no woodwind at all, and the remainder of the orchestra taken down to the chamber realms of just four violins, viola, continuo and timpani.

As for how much of a difference you actually hear, certainly with the disc-opening Handel *Fireworks Music* you do immediately spot that the woodwind are gone, and that the brass colour is entirely and beautifully trumpet. Still, when Handel's original scoring already made much of three natural trumpets, when the engineering here pushes Balsom and her five natural trumpet colleagues right into the limelight, when the timpani is still gloriously rumbling away and when David Goode's organ continuo is richly underpinning the lot, the sound is smoother but not actually noticeably

smaller. However, you do really get the effect of the smaller forces with the Bourrée, and then with the Bach you indisputably get the full effect of big brass versus chamber strings right from 'Jauchzet, frohlocket!'. Whether any of this goes as far as to earn the label 'maverick', which Balsom tentatively attaches to it in her booklet note, I'm not so sure. Perhaps it does with the Bach. Either way, the important thing is that it sounds good.

All the above said, though, for me the album's real gold lies in its two D major solo trumpet works by Purcell and Telemann: the ravishingly soft and lyrical solemnity Balsom brings to the opening *Adagio* of Telemann's first Trumpet Concerto; the suppleness she brings to the Purcell Sonata's outer movements and the luminous, clean-toned sobriety of its strings-only *Adagio*.

Purcell's *Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary* then makes for a thoroughly punchy conclusion, not least for the fine vocal performances from its one-to-a-part chorus and the addition of sombre sackbut.

Charlotte Gardner

Richard Strauss's Don Quixote

Conductor **Vasily Petrenko** shares his feelings about the piece with Andrew Farach-Colton

Vasily Petrenko meets me in the press lounge at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York City. Although he's just finished a gruelling afternoon of rehearsals for Tchaikovsky's *The Queen of Spades*, he appears energetic and eager to talk about his newly released recording of Richard Strauss's *Don Quixote* with the Oslo Philharmonic.

We begin by marvelling at the score's staggering inventiveness in terms of form – an amalgam of symphonic poem, theme and variations, and *sinfonia concertante* – in addition to its orchestral legerdemain and vivid characterisations. 'And remember that Strauss was only in his early thirties when he wrote it,' Petrenko says. 'He wrote it at the same time as *Ein Heldenleben*. Did you know he even insisted on performing the two works side by side in concert? Nobody does it, of course, because the orchestra would probably die.' We both laugh, but actually Petrenko doesn't think the idea is so outlandish. 'I think it would be fascinating for an audience to have these two visions of the hero – one an ideal in the style of Beethoven, and one who's, shall we say, a bit more quirky.' But which hero is the more sympathetic? I myself admit that I find the portrayal of Cervantes's Don the more likeable. With a wry smile, Petrenko dodges the choice. 'Look,' he says, 'even Strauss himself said that he wasn't sure which one was closer to his nature – the dreamer or the one who did the deeds.'

There are less philosophical issues to consider, however, and as we open the densely notated score, Petrenko tells me that the technical challenges begin straight away. He points to the first full bar where the strings must join their pizzicatos to the last note of the flute's demisemiquaver run. 'Because it's so fast, it's really difficult. And then to immediately place the entrance of clarinets and bassoons so they're in tempo and not rushed – there really needs to be a sense of flexibility. After that come the phrases of the second fiddles, marked *grazioso*, which need to feel light and dreamy on the one hand, but also clear, and it's really quite tricky to play. We're framing the picture here, giving the sense of the room where Quixote is sitting and reading his book.'

Petrenko notices that I've written 'Mahler 6 & 7' in my score at rehearsal number 3 (on the recording at 2'03" on track 1). I explain that I find it astounding that Strauss wrote this Mahlerian-sounding passage before Mahler had even completed his First Symphony. 'Yes, using the muted trumpets together with all those low instruments, it is very much that Mahler sound – and particularly of the Seventh Symphony where he added some mysterious colours for his night sentinel theme.'

He turns the page and taps on the solo violin's line (at 3'06"). 'Here you can imagine Quixote reading his book about knights, and thinking of Dulcinea, and it seems to go into the clouds with the solo violin, which sounds as if it's playing in a different key. One can feel the Don's consciousness drifting away from his reading into a wider territory. He's no longer following the story in the book but his own story. He's daydreaming, and how Strauss illustrates this is just



This piece needs a sense of both foreground and background, says Petrenko

incredible.' Indeed, as we keep turning the pages and the music becomes increasingly complex and dissonant, pulled this way and that by thematic fragments and opposing keys, I ask if it's even possible to hear all that's going on, if it's difficult to see the wood for the trees, as it were. 'One of the things I've discovered in making this series of Strauss recordings in Oslo is that it is very easy to make his music sound spectacular if you can achieve transparency, but that alone won't give enough of the texture. You really need a sense of both foreground and background. To do this requires a great orchestra, obviously, and it's important to tell them what the priority is from moment to moment.'

When we get past the introduction to the presentation of Quixote's 'theme', Petrenko reminds me that Strauss originally wanted the solo cellist to be drawn from the orchestra. 'We're so lucky to have Louisa Tuck as principal in Oslo. And also our principal violist Catherine Bullock, and our leader Elise Båtnes – they all do an incredible job. Here it's essential that the cello conveys nobility, and at the same time there should not be even a hint of arrogance. Louisa and I spoke a lot about this. Quixote is not arrogant at all. That's why we're so sympathetic to him. Even if he's doing stupid things like fighting with sheep or monks, he's humble and, most important of all, he's *sincere*. If you start' – he sings the opening cello solo in a pompous tone – 'then you've lost all that. His theme needs to touch the heart – that's what we're aiming for.'

Petrenko has tender feelings towards Sancho Panza, too. 'It's important to portray his character not just as a servant but as a friend. He's certainly more practical than Quixote, and he's not stupid – he's wise, in fact. He saves his knight from many things, and clearly loves him so much that he'll never leave him. So Sancho needs to be presented as very real, which is why I asked the viola and bass clarinet and other instruments who give us his character not to overplay it, not to make him hysterical, even if Sancho does get hysterical in some places!'

We proceed through the variations. The conductor stops to admire Strauss's genius in evoking the sound of sheep in Variation 2. Other composers have captured the sound

of the pasture, he says, but never to this extent. 'It's not just a sound from nature here. For Don Quixote, the sheep represent evil, and Strauss shows that through the music with the brass playing *frullato*' (flutter-tonguing). Then comes Quixote's impassioned conversation with Sancho in Var 3, and in particular the glorious passage that suddenly slips into a radiant F sharp major to represent the Don's dream of knighthood (at 3'57"). 'Here, again, it's very tempting to tell most of the orchestra to shut up and listen to the melody, but that won't work. You need support from the other instruments – a light accompaniment, yes, but still with presence. The listener needs to be able to see the whole picture, otherwise it's like someone singing a song with an empty background.'

Petrenko discusses some of the conductor's challenges in Var 5, notably how to evoke the sudden refreshing breeze (at 1'51"), written *quasi cadenza* in the score. 'Just how to beat it is difficult, as it's in 12.' And on either side of this aero-oasis the orchestra is required to do a lot of waiting and counting while the cello pours out its melancholy soliloquy. 'It's really tricky for the soloist, of course, but also for the orchestra, so when you come to Var 6 everybody has a sense of relief. This always gets smiles from the players, actually, but then we're moving into emotionally easier territory, too. Here, again, you see Strauss looking towards the 20th century in his use of two different keys at once.'

A lot of things in Strauss's tone poems are cinematographic in terms of how one cut goes into another. For me, he laid the groundwork for Hollywood music'

Quixote's ride through the air in Var 7 is exhausting for whoever is turning the huge crank of the wind machine, I'm told – and especially when multiple takes are required in a recording session. And then we come to the barcarolle-like Var 8. I'm particularly struck by the quick transition Strauss concocts between the two, like a quick fade from one scene to another in a film. 'Exactly,' Petrenko says. 'Obviously, this work predates cinema, but a lot of things in Strauss's tone poems are cinematographic in terms of how one cut goes into another. For me, he laid the groundwork for Hollywood music. From him came Korngold and later Max Steiner and on to John Williams, ultimately.' The conductor notes, too, that nearly all of the transitions in this work are quick except for the one from Var 10 to the finale, where Quixote takes the long trip home.

I tell him how affecting I find his performance of the finale, and that the way Tuck shapes its opening phrases makes me melt every time I hear it. 'These 10 or 12 bars are probably the most difficult of all for both the conductor and the soloist. It needs to feel right. It's not so much a matter of fast or slow, because every night it can be different. But if it feels right then what follows will flow naturally. Strangely enough, I think these bars, this return journey (and not the battles with his adversaries), are the key to the whole piece. There needs to be an acknowledgement of what has happened. The loud moments in *Don Quixote* are impressive, yes, but the quiet moments – those are the defining ones.'

► To read our review of Petrenko's recording with Oslo Philharmonic go to page 47

Oslo
Philharmonic

+

NEW RELEASE

LAWO
CLASSICS

www.lawoclassics.com



LWC1184

RICHARD STRAUSS

DON QUIXOTE, OP. 35 / DON JUAN, OP. 20 /
TILL EULENSPIEGELS LUSTIGE STREICHE, OP. 28

Vasily Petrenko

Oslo Philharmonic Orchestra

Louisa Tuck — cello

"Louisa Tuck and Catherine Bullock are both superb in this brilliantly played account."

– SUNDAY TIMES



LWC1088



LWC1105



LWC1139



LWC1160



LWC1166

proper
music distribution

Distributed in the UK
by PROPER MUSIC
www.propermusicgroup.com

Chamber



Mark Seow rejoices in six hours of music by Marin Marais:

'The individual CDs are in separate sleeves adorned with Marais's stunning penmanship – it feels special' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 57**



Richard Whitehouse hears Weinberg in the hands of Gidon Kremer et al:

'It is a measure of Weinberg's current profile that six recordings of the Piano Trio have appeared over the past year' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 60**

Bacewicz

'Complete Violin Sonatas'

Annabelle Berthomé-Reynolds *vn*

Ivan Donchev *pf*

Muso ⑤ ② MU032 (125' • DDD)



The inside cover of this disc shows Grażyna Bacewicz holding a violin; and

if you discovered this composer through the Silesian Quartet's recent *Gramophone* Award-winning cycle of her string quartets (Chandos, 8/16), you won't need to be told why. Bacewicz was a virtuoso violinist, and the instinct for string sonorities that makes her quartets so gloriously listenable also permeates her violin sonatas. The individual works here have, for the most part, been recorded before, but so far as I can tell Annabelle Berthomé-Reynolds and Ivan Donchev are the first to perform all seven violin sonatas, accompanied and unaccompanied, in one recording, along with the imposing Partita of 1955.

And as with her quartets, Bacewicz offers a feast of musicality, wit and concentrated emotion. It's fascinating to map these works on to her biography. The assured and expressive First Sonata for unaccompanied violin of 1941 and the playful, neo-Baroque *Sonata da camera* (for violin and piano) of 1945 are both, in their way, acts of life-affirming defiance during the Nazi occupation of Poland: conscious homages to what the composer termed Bach's 'victory over time' (the booklet notes are thorough and very readable).

With the Third Sonata of 1947 there's a new sense of a fully formed creative voice expressing itself with absolute command. The journey through to the Partita (another, much graver homage to Bach) and the intensely personal but still piercingly lucid Second Solo Sonata (1958 – she asked for the *Adagio* to be played at her funeral) shows Bacewicz walking a very individual line between the conflicting dogmas of socialist realism and

post-war modernism, and doing so with sincerity and a wry underlying wit.

I wish I could be as enthusiastic about these performances. In fairness, Berthomé-Reynolds and Donchev do convey enough of the essential character of this music to give some enjoyment. They're red-blooded, and they keep things taut and mobile. Donchev in particular is adept at creating a sense of space and atmosphere in his phrasing, though the piano sound is a little recessed and slightly harsher than I'd like.

Berthomé-Reynolds is at her best in the two unaccompanied works; and while she does generally capture Bacewicz's quicksilver shifts between *sul ponticello* and *pizzicato*, and lyricism and bravura, too much of her tuning is hit-and-miss. Her wide-grained tone is not unattractive, though it's a very blunt instrument compared to the gleaming, fluid virtuosity of Lydia Mordkovitch's Bacewicz sonatas (Chandos, 9/08). But no other currently available set offers quite so much of this wonderful music in one place, and for that reason – and until something better comes along – it's recommendable. **Richard Bratby**

Beethoven

Violin Sonatas – No 3, Op 12 No 3; No 6, Op 30 No 1; No 7, Op 30 No 2; No 8, Op 30 No 3

Lorenzo Gatto *vn* **Julien Libeer** *pf*

Alpha ⑤ ALPHA565 (81' • DDD)



There's a special fascination to Beethoven's three violin sonatas Op 30 – music that he seems to have written, in a matter of weeks, immediately after drafting the near-suicidal Heiligenstadt Testament. Critical attention has tended to focus on the central, C minor work of the triptych and this new recording – the last instalment in Lorenzo Gatto and Julien Libeer's complete cycle – does a fine job of capturing both its nervous energy and its ambiguity: moving from a taut *Adagio* to a Scherzo that almost seems to skip with

glee, and then on to a finale that sweeps in like a summer storm.

Previous instalments have given some idea of what to expect stylistically: neither player is dogmatic about historically informed style, Gatto deploying vibrato as and when it suits his expressive purpose. But the general spirit is energetic and playful (sometimes boisterously so), and recorded in bright, transparent sound. Earlier discs have used a Maene straight-strung concert grand, with its characteristic clarity; it is not clear whether that is the case throughout this programme, which was recorded in two separate venues.

But these are performances that appreciate that the violinist is accompanist as well as star, and the loveliest moments in Op 12 No 3 come when Libeer places his phrases limpidly over Gatto's figuration. There's warmth as well as brilliance in Op 30 No 1 (they phrase off the *Adagio* beautifully), and a manic, scherzoid energy in the first movement of Op 30 No 2. Nervous tension, rather than profundity, is the keynote of this disc. You'll enjoy it if you like your Beethoven restless and sometimes raw, though the decision to reverse the order of Op 30 Nos 1 and 2 defies either artistic or practical logic. **Richard Bratby**

Beethoven

Complete Works for Cello and Piano

Ori Epstein *vc* **Omri Epstein** *pf*

Linn ⑤ ② CKD627 (156' • DDD)



Does any body of work by a great composer look more unassuming (superficially, at least) and yet yield more riches than the five cello sonatas of Ludwig van Beethoven? Each one is an experiment, requiring a radically different imaginative approach, and it takes a fairly remarkable pairing of cellist and pianist to make the most of music in which, more than almost any other works in the Romantic cello repertoire, the two instruments really



Cellist Johannes Moser and violinist Vadim Gluzman joint pianist Yevgeny Sudbin in Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio – see review on page 60

do converse as equals. Xavier Phillips and François-Frédéric Guy currently head a crowded field with a *Gramophone* Award-nominated set (Harriet Smith described a cycle that ‘unfolds with a sense of total inevitability’ – Evidence, 1/16). The competition, in short, is impossibly tough, and this new set by Ori and Omri Epstein isn't really in contention.

It's not just the uningratiating recorded piano sound – muddy at the bottom, brittle and frequently harsh at the top, and recorded in an ambience that places it slightly too far behind the cello. By way of compensation, Ori's cello sound has its attractive aspects. Its mellowness pays dividends in the slow introductions to the Op 5 Sonatas, in the expansive warmth of Op 69 and above all in the great central *Adagio* of Op 102 No 2, where the piano's boomy bass and the carefully shaped cello phrasing work together to generate an atmosphere that's genuinely compelling.

But too often in these performances the Epsteins lock into a mood and put their heads down, with Beethoven's extremes of dynamics coming across as caricatures; abrasive when loud, mannered when soft. There's an aroma of greasepaint at moments that should feel intimate. This cartoonish approach works better in the three sets of variations, where Omri on

piano is more unambiguously in the leading role and tempers his brilliance with playfulness. And I can imagine these interpretations being very enjoyable as a one-off experience in the concert hall. As a recorded set, for repeated listening, they don't really cut it. **Richard Bratby**

Beethoven

'Piano Trios, Vol 1'

Piano Trios – No 2, Op 1 No 2; No 4, Op 11; No 5, 'Ghost', Op 70 No 1; No 6, Op 70 No 2

Atos Trio

Wigmore Hall Live (two discs for the price of one) WHLIVE0094 (110' • DDD)

Recorded live, December 2, 2015

Beethoven

'Piano Trios, Vol 2'

Piano Trios – No 1, Op 1 No 1; No 3, Op 1 No 3; No 7, 'Archduke', Op 97

Atos Trio

Wigmore Hall Live (two discs for the price of one) WHLIVE0095 (102' • DDD)

Recorded live, March 6, 2016



Coincidentally, just prior to hearing these two double-packs, I'd received a reissue from First Hand Records of the First and Third Trios featuring the George Malcolm Trio recorded in 1976, an immaculate production sound-wise, warmly and thoughtfully played and providing an ideal point of comparison with the Atos Trio. Right from the opening bars of the First Trio, major differences are apparent, the lively Malcolm ensemble telling it as it is, the Atos bounding in on a spread chord, before embracing the opening *Allegro* with all manner of varied nuances.

Note that I write 'manner' and not 'mannered', which they virtually never are, more proponents of conversational teamwork, with especially elegant piano-playing from Thomas Hoppe (Op 1 No 1's second movement is a good place to sample). The witty finale is taken at a real lick yet never sounds rushed, whereas for the Third Trio's tense opening vibrato is all but suspended. The mood lightens for the lovely second subject but without a dip in tempo. Malcolm's trio are similarly attentive if rather more urbane. The Atos are perhaps at their best in the Second (G major) Trio, the opening especially, while Hoppe's expressive phrasing at the start of the *Largo con espressione* slow movement is deeply affecting, as is the

GRAMOPHONE *Focus*

LIVED-IN BEETHOVEN

Andrew Farach-Colton enjoys a rewarding journey through Beethoven's string quartets with the Miró Quartet



The Miró Quartet bring a distinctive blend of elegance and daring to Beethoven

Beethoven

Complete String Quartets

Miró Quartet

Pentatone ® PTC5186 827 (8h 34' • DDD)

Recorded 2004-19: Op 18 from Vanguard Classics
ATMCD1655 (11/05); Op 59 from Longhorn Music
LHM2012004 (12/13^{US})



The Miró Quartet began their Beethoven cycle in 2004 with Op 18.

I sat in on one of those recording dates for a *Gramophone* 'session report' (8/05) and witnessed first-hand the Miró's unflagging attention to detail, aided by the keen ear of producer Da-Hong Seetoo (a Juilliard-trained violinist himself). Rob Cowan's review (11/05) praised the quartet's 'consistently animated and imaginative' approach, although he became bothered by their 'tendency to insert tiny points of punctuation'. Revisiting those performances reissued here, I find myself very much in agreement. The way the Miró revel in the music's daring without sacrificing any of its surface polish

remains impressive. Their playing is always articulate and balanced with care, even when they opt for a breakneck tempo – try, say, the last movement of No 5, which in their hands becomes a grinning, giddy homage to the *Jupiter* Symphony's finale. The aforementioned 'punctuation' tends to occur where Beethoven indicates a sudden change in dynamic; the Miró take a collective breath to underscore the change, and it does indeed become distracting.

RC's summary judgement that the Miró's playing 'suggests huge potential' and requires merely 'a little time to settle' also seems spot on. So, for example, those intrusive punctuation marks are entirely absent in the newer recordings, made between 2012 and 2019 (the cycle was recorded more or less chronologically by opus number). In the meantime, the quartet changed second violinists, with William Fedkenheuer replacing Sandy Yamamoto – and record labels (Op 18 was originally released by Vanguard Classics) – yet their style retains its distinctive blend of elegance and daring. As in the 'early' quartets, tempos in the middle-period works can be surprisingly brisk. The *Allegro* of Op 59 No 1 feels to

me to be in two beats to a bar (cut time) rather than four to a bar (common time), as marked. Considering the composer's bracing metronome markings for the symphonies, I'm sure a case could be made for similar swiftness in the string quartets, but the breathlessness does take some getting used to. I wonder, too, if it allows for true *dolce* playing where indicated – as in the magical shift from F major to D flat at 6'29" of that movement. Not all of the movements are so fleet, mind you, and in some the sense of haste is extremely effective. Take the *Allegro* of Op 59 No 2, where the Miró's combination of urgency and hair-trigger responsiveness makes the music feel especially vertiginous. And even when a movement seems pushed to the brink, as in that same quartet's galloping finale, the conviction of the playing is as astonishing as its sheer technical finesse.

Listening as the opus numbers ascend and the quartets gradually gather amplitude and expressive weight, I was struck by how persuasively the Miró are able to convey the sweep of a movement. This has less to do with tempo, I think, than with a clear understanding of how its myriad parts – both vertical and horizontal – fit into the whole. It's readily apparent in a highly concentrated work such as Op 95, where the Miró's intensity never overheats (I jotted the phrase 'pale fire', from Nabukov via Shakespeare, in my notes), but I think one feels it even in the gloriously expansive slow movements of Opp 131 and 132, as well as in the *Grosse Fuge*, although I do think the latter could benefit from a greater feeling of wild abandon. Other than that, however, and a slightly brittle reading of Op 130's second finale, I find the 'late' quartets to be the glory of this cycle. The *Adagio* of Op 127, for instance, is sublime: intimate, vulnerable (I swoon at the way first violinist Daniel Ching feels his way so gingerly through the opening phrases), yet dignified, too. Op 135 is another marvel, from the quizzical, changeable opening *Allegretto*, rendered here with such unassuming confidence, to the finale's joyful sense of acceptance and – more unexpectedly – gratitude.

At their best, which is a fair percentage of this handsomely recorded cycle, the Miró get to the very core of Beethoven's art, and they do so by revealing the specific genius of each individual quartet. Despite my caveats, there's so much profoundly satisfying music-making here that I can strongly recommend it to others who hold these works near to their hearts. **G**

way the strings pick up the line after him. And how beautiful the mysterious second subject, which sounds like an ethereal message from beyond.

When it comes to the *Archduke*, I wasn't quite so sure about Hoppe's accentuated approach to the opening bars. I just happened to have the Stern-Rose-Istomin version by me (10/70, included in Sony Classical's recent 'Beethoven Legendary Recordings' set – see page 100), where straight reportage is so much more effective. Then again, the Atos's lilting approach to the second movement focuses the music's playful character to perfection, in marked contrast with the eerie Trio section where, again, vibrato falls away as so much unwanted decoration. The slow movement is warmly voiced, and the finale returns us to a mood of playfulness.

Of the two Op 70 Trios, the *Ghost* is the more impressive as a performance, the opening *Allegro* truly *con brio*, the misty slow movement worthy as soundtrack material for the twilight world of Poe. Of course, other trios achieve a similarly inspired effect, but the live context adds tension to the present performance.

The Haydn-esque B flat Trio, Op 11, is bright and breezy, the closing 'theme with variations' a delight in itself. My personal favourite among the Trios is the E flat, Op 70 No 2, with its weird harmonic twists (specifically in the third movement) and the explosive finale, though here I always have the Heifetz and Stern recordings in mind (on Sony Classical, the latter in the same 'Legendary Recordings' box as the *Archduke*), both so taut and energised, especially in the deliriously joyful second subject. Here the Atos give unbounded delirium a miss.

Those readers who object to 'post-finale' applause are warned that it's included. It doesn't worry me, I have to say, especially given that the quality of the music-making is well worth celebrating. As to recommending this set above the Stern-Rose-Istomin and Beaux Arts (Decca) recordings, not to mention other fine versions of individual trios, no, I wouldn't say so, but it's extremely fine all the same and the sound is first-rate. Misha Donat provides expert annotations.

Rob Cowan

Op 1 Nos 1 & 3 – selected comparison:

George Malcolm Trio (5/77^R) (FIRS) FHR96

Franck • Chopin • Piazzolla

Chopin Cello Sonata, Op 65. Introduction and Polonaise brillante, Op 3 **Franck** Violin (Cello) Sonata **Piazzolla** Le Grand Tango **Gautier Capuçon** vc **Yuja Wang** pf Erato © 9029 53922-6 (79' • DDD)



Whether or not Franck originally conceived his Violin Sonata for

cello and piano, as now seems probable, the version played here was definitely sanctioned by the composer at the request of his cellist friend Jules Delsart. It is one of those lovable works few can resist whichever of the two instruments it is played on.

However, the performance here is not the most lovable I have heard. Capuçon's first entry sets the tone for his gruff, blustery approach, aided and abetted by the sound engineering, while the demure and reticent Yuja Wang takes a back seat. It's as though a bully of a husband constantly interrupts his wife, talks over her and dismisses her contribution, while the wife patiently but persistently continues to put her point of view across. The second movement is *allegro*, not *presto*, and surprisingly, given her fabulously fleet fingers, Wang does not articulate the fiery passagework anything like clearly. For that – while retaining the requisite ardency – turn to du Pré and Barenboim (EMI/Warner, 2/73), a real-life husband-and-wife team who had no problem with gender equality either musically or in the recording balance.

The overbearing cello is not quite as prominent in the two Chopin works. In the Introduction of Op 3 Wang, like Argerich with Maisky, shoots off her two opening salvos with tremendous brio (I prefer Franz Rupp's more measured approach with Emanuel Feuermann back in 1939) while adopting a gentler and altogether lighter touch than Argerich in the Polonaise. Wang's *leggiere* and *dolcissimo* playing is truly gorgeous to hear but does not sit comfortably with the feisty character of her partner.

Strangely, in the Cello Sonata, its first movement notorious for its inbuilt problems regarding the balance between cello and piano, I was not as concerned about this mismatch but became all too aware of the first movement's length (played with its exposition repeat). Despite the manifest skills of these two musicians on display here, I began wondering how much time they had been able to spend together preparing the work.

Capuçon and Wang conclude their programme with the anachronistic choice of Piazzolla's *Le Grand Tango*, a piece they clearly enjoy. **Jeremy Nicholas**

Marais

Deuxième livre de Pièces de viole

François Joubert-Caillet *bass viol* **L'Achéron**

Ricercar © 5 RIC408 (5h 56' • DDD)



Upon reviewing this release, I had every intention of listening to it every day until

publication. Six hours of Marin Marais every day for a month: a total of 186 hours – that's just under eight full days in French Baroque paradise. The plan was to move organically between periods of intense listening and states of vibrational immersion, simply being 'in Marais'. As you may have guessed, listening to six hours of Marais a day is completely incompatible with modern life. But were it not – and do stop for a moment to picture that heaven – this would be one recording to have in your possession.

That does, though, bring an important question to mind. What function does François Joubert-Caillet and L'Achéron's five-disc set have? How are listeners meant to use it, embed it within their sonic lives? There is, of course, no one answer to this, nor one way to listen to a disc set. But as other Marais recordings emerge – I reviewed the 'generous, introspective, romantic, adventurous' sound of Robert Smith's 'La Gracieuse' (Resonus) in the Awards issue just two months ago, on which many movements of the same dances appear here too – it is reasonable to question what this sort of recorded artefact does, and whether by having a complete box-set it does that better or not.

Certainly, if you are after comprehensiveness – a complete collection of Marais's *Deuxième livre* – then this release from Ricercar provides a beautiful object. The individual CDs are in separate sleeves adorned with Marais's stunning penmanship. It feels special. The booklet notes by Jérôme Lejeune are excellent, and Joubert-Caillet's more personal contribution is also entirely welcome. In this, we learn about more specific recording decisions – some intriguingly unhistorical – such as the use of harp and an Italian harpsichord as continuo instruments.

The recording clearly seeks variety (and knows that it must), and the different configurations of continuo support demonstrate this. The support in, for example, the sarabande 'La Désolée' from the Suite in G (disc 2) is plucked perfection. It is difficult to fault Joubert-Caillet's bowed song too, a *cantabile* woven

with nostalgia, threaded in mordent, *tremblement* and *port de voix*. What is striking, however, is the way that Joubert-Caillet and his team do not consistently pursue the heavenly that is the agenda of so many Marais performances. The moments where elegance is left outside the recording studio door, too, are extraordinary: less swirling sway, more growling funk, Joubert-Caillet and L'Achéron unleash a carnivalesque energy that does not ask listeners for consent should they not wish to dance. There are no chairs at this party. The closing Chaconne of the Suite in E minor (disc 3), once warmed up, is earthy, sweaty even. The 'Couplets de Folies' from the Suite in D (disc 5), another variation-scheme slow-burner, is steeped in groove and tongue-in-cheek tempo changes. In all, five discs of superb musicianship: unpredictably fun and grippingly presented. **Mark Seow**

Perle

Serenades - No 1^a; No 2; No 3^b

^aWenting Kang *va* ^bDonald Berman *pf*

Boston Modern Orchestra Project / Gil Rose

BMOP/sound © 1067 (54' • DDD)



The Boston Modern Orchestra Project are quietly building a most impressive library of

contemporary American composition. For their latest release, though, they have turned to the long-lived George Perle (1915-2009), whose three Serenades were written between 1962 and 1983. Perle was one of America's ablest composers technically, an exponent of tonal 12-note music and an expert on the music of Berg.

While Berg was a crucial influence for Perle, his music does not really sound like the Austrian at all. The First Serenade (1962) is a case in point: for all its use of 12-note rows, Hindemith comes to mind rather in the angular viola-writing (it was composed for Walter Trampler, a noted Hindemith interpreter), superbly rendered here by Wenting Kang. Indeed, all three serenades bear more than a hint of Hindemith's *Kammermusiken* about them, scored for 11 players (mostly winds), including the soloists, though the Second (1968) is an ensemble piece. All three also run to five movements, generally delightful, light-hearted sequences of *allegros*, *recitativos*, *scherzos* and *burlescos* with the occasional elegy. No 3 for piano (1983) is the finest, a real mini-concerto; Donald Berman is as persuasive as Richard Goode (Bridge and Nonesuch), though BMOP's sound is comparatively rather closer-miked.

At 54 minutes, this release is reasonable in duration; however, I cannot help feeling an opportunity has been lost to present Perle's complete works for larger chamber ensembles – as the composer's website categorises them – by omitting the 16-minute Intermezzo for 15 players (1987). It would have made a good encore and, more importantly, filled a gap. (However, the alternate version for piano solo is available from Bridge and New World.) That said, this splendid, well-performed disc is indispensable for devotees of late 20th-century American music (and should appeal more widely), with beautifully clear sound. **Guy Rickards**

Serenade No 3 – comparative version:

Goode, *Music Today Ens*, Schwarz (BRID) BRIDGE9214; (NONE) 0349 71292-6

Rachmaninov • Shostakovich • Denisov

Denisov Variations on a Theme by Schubert

Rachmaninov Cello Sonata, Op 19

Shostakovich Cello Sonata, Op 40

Victor Julien-Laferrrière *vc* Jonas Vitaud *pf*

Alpha © ALPHA547 (78' • DDD)



Twentieth-century Russia left cellists spoiled for choice: a player who wants to record a sonata disc can choose from bona fide masterpieces by Rachmaninov, Prokofiev and Shostakovich, with Stravinsky's *Suite italienne* as a filler. Hats off, then, to the young French cellist Victor Julien-Laferrrière (winner of the 2017 Queen Elisabeth Competition) for eschewing the obvious and pairing his blockbusters with the much rarer *Variations on a Theme by Schubert* by Edison Denisov, written in 1986, though you wouldn't guess it.

More of that in a moment; for now, the disc opens with a performance of Shostakovich's Cello Sonata which, if neither the weightiest nor the most brilliant on disc, yields to no one in pure musicality. Julien-Laferrrière has a Gallic tone in the best possible sense: focused and nimble, capable of intense sweetness (the second subject of the first movement positively melts) but robed in genuine warmth of sound, and alert to Shostakovich's humour as well as his darkness. After a lyrical first movement, the Scherzo is a little whirlwind. Pianist Jonas Vitaud brings clarity and verve to the finale: the two are absolutely on the same page and their intimacy and give-and-take sound utterly unforced.

The Denisov is a curious piece: more of an extended fantasy than a set of variations on Schubert's A flat Impromptu, with Julien-Laferrrière searching and sure-footed in Denisov's generally high-lying writing. You can probably already imagine how this all adds up to a fresh, expressive and wonderfully lyrical account of the Rachmaninov Sonata. If one might perhaps have hoped for a slightly more opulent sound from Vitaud, it hardly seems to matter in the face of such generous and communicative music-making. **Richard Bratby**

Schubert

Piano Trio No 2, D929. Notturmo, D897

Hamlet Piano Trio

Channel Classics © CCS41719 (58' • DDD)



The booklet is an oddity, describing the wonderful *Notturmo*, D897,

as 'a great rarity'. Presumably that's a rarity along the lines of rats on the London Underground, or Olivia Colman's television appearances. Moreover, the note also claims that this E flat work was composed as the original second movement of the E flat Trio, D929; most opinion (for example, Martin Chusid in *The Cambridge Companion to Schubert*) connects it more firmly with the First Trio, the B flat work, D898.

Don't cast the booklet away, though, as it contains a brief introduction by the recording's cellist, Xenia Jankovic, explaining the revelation to these players of switching from modern instruments to gut strings and classical bows. You're aware of the change in balance right from the *Notturmo*'s opening rolled piano chords, gently brushed by Paolo Giacometti on a Conrad Graf from c1826. In the two *fortissimo* sections and, even more so, from the very outset of the E flat Trio, these instruments complement each other in a way steel strings and a Steinway cannot, the focus shifted away from the piano towards the strings, with the result that the violin (Candida Thompson) and cello don't have to fight to be heard against the piano.

Another bonus is that the Hamlet Trio play the original, pre-publication version of the finale, complete with exposition repeat and an additional 98 bars in the development, which Schubert evidently felt too much for players or audiences of the time. One important structural point lost in the familiar cut version is a passage in which the theme of the slow movement returns, played simultaneously with the



CULTURAL TOURS, PRIVATE VIEWS & STUDY DAYS

Our visits are led by experts whose passion and authority on their subjects are equal to their sense of hospitality, attention to detail and above all, their sense of fun.

SELECTED TOURS

THE VOICE OF GOD: IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF J.S.BACH

15 - 22 JUNE 2020
WITH PETER HILL

VILLAS, GARDENS, OPERAS & WINE: VERONA & THE VALPOLICELLA

6 - 11 JULY 2020
WITH JAMES HILL

OPERA IN THE COUNTRY: THE GLYNDEBOURNE FESTIVAL

3 - 7 AUGUST 2020
WITH TOM DUNCAN

PRUSSIA & THE RISE OF GERMANY: BERLIN & POTSDAM

25 - 30 OCTOBER 2020
WITH TOM DUNCAN

A FESTIVE WEEKEND: DONIZETTI IN BERGAMO

18 - 22 NOVEMBER 2020
WITH TOM DUNCAN

To request a
brochure please
call 01869 811167,
email or visit
our website



Leipzig, Johann Sebastian Bach

CONTACT US

+44 (0) 1869 811167 | info@ciceroni.co.uk | www.ciceroni.co.uk



Karsten Scholz

plays all Beethoven Piano Sonatas



© Sandra Grünberg/photo credit: Verena Meier

Patron HRH The Prince of Wales

DONATELLA FLICK

LSO CONDUCTING
COMPETITION 2021

Entry is through online submission only at
lso.co.uk/conductingcompetition

The deadline for submissions is
6pm GMT on Friday 26 June 2020.

30 Year Anniversary

London Symphony Orchestra

cimbalom-like repeated-note figure – the only time this juxtaposition occurs.

The piano trios aren't often recorded on period instruments and it's good to hear, just occasionally, the longer and more garrulous finale of the E flat, especially when played and engineered (Jared Sacks) as finely as it is here. **David Threasher**

Shostakovich

'Last Three String Quartets'

String Quartets – No 13, Op 138;

No 14, Op 142; No 15, Op 144

Fitzwilliam Quartet

Linn ⑤ ② CKD612 (86' • DDD)



Only one of the players on this official 50th-anniversary recording was part of

the Fitzwilliam Quartet that recorded the group's historic Shostakovich cycle in 1977. That'd be the viola player, Alan George, and it's his presence, his experience and his recollections of the group's extraordinary relationship with the composer (thoroughly documented in the booklet) that makes this more than simply a powerful and superbly played new Shostakovich recording.

A comparison with those classic recordings is unavoidable. I started with the Fifteenth Quartet, and whereas in 1977 the Fitzwilliams positively throbbed, what we get in 2019 is unmistakably a 21st-century quartet sound – unafraid to dial down the vibrato but nonetheless producing a singing, chant-like line. George mentions how, in the 1970s, the idea of a non-Russian quartet playing Shostakovich was almost heresy. The original Fitzwilliams carefully studied the style of such leading Soviet-era outfits as the Beethovens and Borodins. But we're past that now, and these transparent, refined and frequently brilliant performances are thoroughly up to date.

Which is not to suggest that they lack passion or understanding of the idiom. George's presence guarantees that, and his own warm and eloquent playing is one of the glories of this disc. None of these four players is afraid to push things to extremes; the blinding shaft of sound with which the violins shatter the opening meditation of the Thirteenth Quartet has the intensity of a migraine. The shriek that ends the same work – and which returns at the end of the Fifteenth's opening Elegy – is properly frightening. They're raw where they need to be, and the black humour of the Fourteenth Quartet's outer movements can flip within a phrase into playfulness or terror. The Fitzwilliams never quite let you relax.

And yet – and this is perhaps the most fascinating revelation – you're repeatedly blindsided by the tenderness and humour of this supposedly death-haunted music. George's viola wandering softly through the Nocturne of the Fifteenth, or the delicacy and sense of sonic perspective (the recorded balance is atmospheric and admirably clear) with which the Fifteenth shivers into silence; the natural, half-humorous lilt as the Thirteenth moves into its *Doppio movimento* or the positively Mahlerian *Adagio* of the Fourteenth – these, and countless other moments, paint a picture of the composer that is simultaneously intimate and epic; mysterious and yet uncompromising. In short, these are performances born of honesty and of love: a deeply moving document of a great quartet and its unique connection to a composer who George remembers as a man of 'simple humility, human warmth, kindness and generosity'. **Richard Bratby**

Tchaikovsky • Babajanian • Schnittke

Babajanian Piano Trio Schnittke Life with an Idiot – Tango Tchaikovsky Piano Trio, Op 50

Vadim Gluzman *vn* Johannes Moser *vc*

Yevgeny Sudbin *pf*

BIS ⑤ ② BIS2372 (73' • DDD/DSD)



Tchaikovsky's Piano Trio is, by any standards, one of the peaks of the repertoire; given the difficulties balancing the three instruments, one of the most demanding, too. Its enormous length – Sudbin, Gluzman and Moser come in at 48'20" here – provides an additional challenge, as Tchaikovsky's complex structure is a diptych where the finale (12 variations and coda on a folk song) divides into distinct groups either side of a central fugue (Var 8), the 12th expanded to form a weighty conclusion. Some high-profile predecessors on disc (not least the Beaux Arts Trio, and the Borodin in 1981) made cuts, even omitting whole variations.

Tchaikovsky disliked the trio as a genre but choosing it for his memorial to Nikolay Rubinstein solved his need for a work of major heft yet intimate reflection. What I like about this beautifully (if slightly distantly) recorded newcomer is the way both elements are reconciled so convincingly. Throughout the first movement, *Pezzo elegiaco*, the three players sound in complete accord. Moser's cello may lead the way initially but it is Sudbin who binds the whole together, conveying

the powerful piano part without overwhelming his colleagues. This pinpoint balance repeats throughout the second movement, whether in the waltz and mazurka (Vars 6 and 9) or the hushed *Moderato* (Var 11). It is a trio masterclass.

What to couple it with? Rubinstein piano pieces (the Fujita Trio), Rachmaninov's *Trio élégiaque* (the Gould), Arensky (Trio Wanderer) or, as the Borodin did in 1990, Alyabiev's, also in A minor? Here we have Arno Babajanian's bracing, folk-inflected Trio with its heart-stopping central *Andante*. This newcomer is as competitive as any of its dozen rivals, full of fire like the Lincoln's. There's swing and subtlety in the encore, Sudbin's arrangement of Schnittke's Tango, composed for the film *Agony* (1974) but reused in the opera *Life with an Idiot* (1992). Recommended. **Guy Rickards**

Tchaikovsky – selected comparisons:

Beaux Arts Trio (1/72^R, 9/84^R) (PHIL) ➔ 422 400-2PH

Asbkenazy, Perlman, Harrell

(7/81^R, 12/87^R) (WARN) 2564 61299-9

Borodin Trio (2/85) (CHAN) CHAN8948

Gould Trio (2/11) (CHAM) CHRC012

Trio Wanderer (2/14) (HARM) HMC90 2161

Borodin Trio (CHAN) CHAN8975

Fujita Trio (INTI) IMCD085

Babajanian – selected comparison:

Lincoln Trio (12/16) (CEDI) CDR90000 165

Weinberg

Piano Trio, Op 24^a. Three Pieces.

Violin Sonata No 6, Op 136^{bis}

Gidon Kremer *vn* ^aGiedrė Dirvanauskaitė *vc*

Yulianna Avdeeva *pf*

DG ⑤ ② 483 7522GH (59' • DDD)



DG follows its release of Weinberg symphonies (6/19) with one of chamber

music featuring members of Kremerata Baltica. Works for violin and piano frame almost the entirety of this composer's output: the *Three Pieces* (1934) find the teenager working through the influence of Szymanowski in the high-flown eloquence of its Nocturne then of Bartók in its tensile Scherzo, before he arrives at a far more personal idiom in 'Dream about a Doll' with its striking interplay of ominousness and whimsy. Forward almost five decades and the Sixth Violin Sonata (1982) yields an emotional impact that belies its compression – the first movement recalling Ustvolskaya in its stark opposition of irreconcilable forces mediated in the brief *Adagio*, before the finale brings their fraught confrontation and fateful dispersal.



Fretwork at their finest: Richard Boothby and his fellow gamba players champion core English consort music as well as contemporary music for viols

Placed between them, the Piano Trio (1945) is among the finest works of Weinberg's early maturity. Less substantial while no less involving than the Piano Quintet which preceded it, this unfolds from the purposeful contrasts of a Prelude and Aria, via a propulsive Toccata and alluringly reticent Aria, to a finale that bracingly combines elements of fantasy and fugue through to a visceral climax and lengthy postlude which recalls earlier themes from an affecting remove. The outcome is a triumph of formal integration and expressive power.

It is a measure of Weinberg's current profile that six recordings of this piece have appeared over the past year, with Gidon Kremer and his colleagues preferable to the incisive if overly self-contained version on Hänssler. (Reissue of an electrifying 1995 Russian account, once on Olympia, would be welcome.) Elsewhere, Kremer and Yulianna Avdeeva equal Linus Roth and José Gallardo for impetus though exceed them for insight. Highly immediate sound and decent notes round out a valuable addition to Weinberg's discography in his centenary year. **Richard Whitehouse**

Three Pieces, Violin Sonata No 6 – selected comparison:

Roth, Gallardo (9/13) (CHAL) CC72567

Piano Trio – selected comparison:

Sitkovetsky, Geringas, Nemtsov (6/06) (HANS) CD98 491

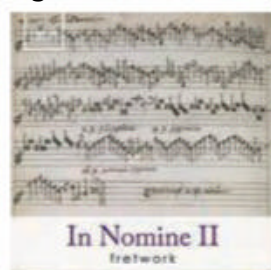
'In nomine II'

Baldwin In nomine 1606. Proportions to the Minim. Upon In nomine 1592 **Bryars** In nomine

Bull In nomine in 11/4 **Ferrabosco** In nomines in Six Parts – No 1; No 2. In nomine Through All the Parts **Muhly** Slow (In nomine in Five Parts) **Parsons** In nomines in Seven Parts – IV; V **Purcell** In nomine in Seven Parts, Z747 **Tye** Howlde Fast. Re la re. Reporte **Ward** In nomine in Five Parts

Fretwork

Signum © SIGCD576 (60' • DDD)



Though Richard Boothby writes in the booklet notes that this 'isn't an anniversary'

of their first recording, 'In nomine' (Amon Ra, 3/88), it's difficult not to listen to this superb recording as a summation of a superb lifetime's work. That today's Fretwork, apart from Boothby, is made up of wholly different people to the group's early days (though founder William Hunt and early member Susanna Pell do join the team for the *In nomines* in five and six parts) doesn't make a bit of difference: this release speaks of a sustained commitment to the core repertory of English consort music while championing contemporary music for viols.

Nico Muhly's *Slow* opens the disc with lightning incision. Where's the *In nomine*, you may ask, in this surging sound of neurons, this relentless electric train of the human body? But then acclimatisation occurs, and individual sparks of *moto*

perpetuo give way to a tempo undetermined by how fast bows are travelling. We hear the larger pulsations of the *In nomine* passed round below; it's a glorious experiment in time, patience, meditation through activity. The other contemporary track is also a triumph. Gavin Bryars writes wonderfully for the consort: sinister homophony mourns in the way that only a viola da gamba can, and time itself slows down too as if to pay respect.

The disc, however, is best when at home in 16th-century England. The *In nomine in 11/4* by John Bull is truly wonderful. The group make an intoxicating, luxurious sound which, combined with Bull's unusual time signature and metric devices, creates an unceasing sense of motion that invades listeners' ears and seems to usurp their very flow of blood. The lusciousness of the *In nomine Through All the Parts* by Alfonso Ferrabosco II also jousts for top position. Resplendent counterpoint (I can't begin to imagine how many hours were spent tuning and refining the positions of frets during the recording process – this is intonation of luminous mathematics) and a shared sense of breath and line tumble seamlessly between sections. This is Fretwork at their finest: historical sympathy and innovation in bounds, a fearless endeavour to plough through the 21st century in all its noise and ugliness with these old and fragile instruments that continue to have so much to say. **Mark Seow**

Hans Swarowsky

Peter Quantrill champions the Austrian conductor and pedagogue who once wavered between the callings of music and psychoanalysis, and about whom many still wax lyrical

According to Mariss Jansons, ‘Everything he said or analysed was amazing. You could sit there breathlessly and just listen.’ Iván Fischer remembers him wanting to hear ‘the piece itself’ and nothing else: ‘He was a disciple of Neue Sachlichkeit [New Objectivity] whose duty as he saw it above all was to serve the composer.’ For Zubin Mehta, quite simply: ‘He was my idol in so many ways. I admired him unreservedly, and I still consider him the greatest intellect I have ever encountered.’

It was hearing Richard Strauss’s *Der Rosenkavalier* waltzes conducted by Hans Swarowsky that inspired Jansons to uproot himself from Riga and travel to Vienna, where Swarowsky ran a conducting class at the Music Academy that can justly be called legendary. Look further down the roll call of his students and you see Abbado, Sinopoli, Mario Venzago, Manfred Huss, Adám Fischer, Bruno Weil ... And, beyond those who went on to follow Swarowsky’s own calling, Martha Argerich, Plácido Domingo and the scholar Constantin Floros all passed through his class.

‘When I hear another Swarowsky pupil,’ says Iván Fischer, ‘I always hear his influence working within them, because he was so strong a personality, and so convincing a musician.’ Many conductors may have wished they could haul a singer over the coals for showboating, but few have followed through and done it, as Swarowsky reportedly did to Mariano Stabile in 1950 while recording ‘Là ci darem la mano’ from *Don Giovanni*: ‘Mozart has written no change of tempo and there will be no change of tempo!’

If these recollections leave the impression of a score-bound martinet, try those *Rosenkavalier* waltzes for

yourself and you’ll find them as sly, tender and unsentimental as the composer’s own recordings. Freshly remastered, they feature within an 11-CD box of live, radio and commercial recordings compiled for Günter Hänssler’s Profil label to mark the 120th anniversary of the conductor’s birth. A 2018

exhibition at the Vienna State Opera displayed photos, scores and effects to tell the story of Swarowsky’s life.

And what a life it was, beginning in Vienna in September 1899 with

his birth out of wedlock to the daughter of a Viennese police inspector, like a subplot of *Der Rosenkavalier* itself. He grew up in advantageous circumstances thanks to the Jewish banker who was most likely his father. Having fought on the Italian front in the First World War, Swarowsky was captured, escaped and fell in love with a local girl (‘I’ve never known a foreigner speak such perfect Italian,’ Sinopoli later

said). Discharged from the army in 1919, he studied with Busoni and attended lectures given by Freud and Karl Kraus, the lion of pre-war literary Vienna. While he wavered between the callings of music and psychoanalysis, attending a performance of Mahler’s Third in 1920 settled the matter. The symphony took on emblematic significance for him; so did the music of Richard Strauss.

Swarowsky conducted at the Vienna Volksoper during the 1920s and into the ’30s, then took up more prestigious posts in Hamburg and Berlin. But his uncertain paternity told against him in the growing climate of anti-Semitism, his friendship with Strauss counted for naught, and he found temporary refuge as Music Director of the Zurich Opera, where he worked with Stravinsky and stage director Walter Felsenstein.

Swarowsky ran a conducting class at the Vienna Music Academy that can justly be called legendary

DEFINING MOMENTS

• **1912 – *Premiere of Mahler’s Eighth Symphony, Munich***
Sings in children’s chorus under the direction of the composer.

• **1944 – *Music director of the Polish PO, Kraków***
Swarowsky (having in straitened circumstances assisted Clemens Krauss with the libretto of *Capriccio* at the request of the composer) is secured this post by Strauss, under governorship of Hans Frank, outside the diktats of the German Reich. Employs musicians from the Plaszów concentration camp – and gets by.

• **1946 – *Return to Vienna***
After denazification by a US tribunal, becomes Music Director of Vienna Symphony, and establishes his class at the Music Academy.

• **1947 – *Becomes director of the Graz Opera***
Marries for the third time, at the age of 48, to 17-year-old Doris Kreuz; Karl Böhm and violinist Wolfgang Schneiderhan serve as ushers; Doris bears the last two of his four children, Daniela and Gloria (the latter born while he attended rehearsals for Beethoven’s *Missa solemnis* led by Bernstein in Vienna).

• **1957 – *Becomes chief conductor of Scottish National Orchestra***
A brief post, which he left three years later, but which introduced UK audiences to the powerful sweep of his Beethoven and Strauss interpretations, some of which survive as broadcasts.


• **1975 – *September 10: dies from cancer in Salzburg***
Four years later his reflections on conducting are published as *Wahrung der Gestalt* (‘Holding Shape’), in which he outlines his principles of interpretation, with particular reference to tempo relationships. A published English translation is forthcoming.



A picture begins to take shape of a reluctant romantic, a Viennese musician to his fingertips, in touch with all that city's musical traditions (and the Profil set concludes with a delicious collection of Czech- and home-made waltzes and polkas) but too conscientious and curious-minded to work within their limits and take them for granted. An opera box of Swarowsky would no less persuasively present *Tosca* and *Don Giovanni* – and the shoestring *Ring* he recorded in Nuremberg during the weeks before the 1968 Soviet invasion of Prague. Perhaps because of its release on sundry budget labels (an image problem afflicting most of Swarowsky's studio recordings), the cycle received a dusty reception in the UK and US, but the makeshift casting and 'characterful' Czech scratch band create their own, powerfully spontaneous

atmosphere, enhanced by conducting that presses at the heels of the drama, almost as if the Soviet tanks were at the door of the studio.

Further examples of his mercurial spirit survive in his partnership with one-off creative spirits such as Ivry Gitlis (a whirlwind Mendelssohn Violin Concerto) and Friedrich Gulda, the soloist on a footloose Piano Concerto K467 from 1962 where Mozart really sings the blues, decades before period-instrument musicians caught up with the idea that the music lies not only in, but in between, the notes.

At least in theory, Swarowsky understood the humility required of a good conductor, 'who only makes signs in the air,' he wrote, 'but whose hands are those of a "conjurer" (although the "magic" is carried out by others). He may well be grateful that his baton produces no sound!' 

THE ESSENTIAL RECORDING



'Hans Swarowsky - The Conductor'

Profil

In Haydn, Brahms, Schoenberg and more, Swarowsky's aesthetic of radical conservatism cuts through countless received ideas with unfailing clarity of purpose and sensitivity to idiom. The results are always bracing, often revelatory.

Instrumental



Jed Distler on Conrad Tao's ambitious new album 'American Rage':

'Rzewski's "Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues" may be the so-called new piano music repertoire's Chopin A flat Polonaise' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 69](#)



Michelle Assay listens to a selection of encores from Nelson Freire:

'At the heart of the programme are 12 Grieg Lyric Pieces, each here depicted as a delightful tableau' ► [REVIEW ON PAGE 70](#)

JS Bach

Six French Suites, BWV812-817. Adagio, BWV968. Fantasias - BWV920; BWV922. Keyboard Sonata, BWV964. Prelude (Fantasia), BWV921
Alexandra Papastefanou *pf*
First Hand © (two discs for the price of one) FHR70 (142' • DDD)



For all the myriad appeal of the six *French Suites* and miscellaneous

transcriptions of Alexandra Papastefanou's new two-disc First Hand release, it is difficult to place her among contemporary Bach pianists. She worked with Aliki Vatikioti at the Athens Conservatoire, Olga Zhukova in Moscow, with two Hungarians, Péter Solymos and György Sebók, and with Alfred Brendel. Despite so polyglot a pianistic lineage, or perhaps because of it, Papastefanou seems *sui generis*.

She is first and foremost a deeply expressive player, whose Bach speaks with tremendous stylistic assurance. She pulls off the 'unmeasured prelude' of the E flat *French Suite* with the improvisatory élan of a schooled continuo veteran. The Sarabandes, which feature as the third or fourth movement in all six Suites, exhibit wide-ranging character, yet with a beautifully poised *cantabile* in common. Although I find the accentuation in the concluding Gigue a bit distracting in the long run, tempos are secure and the character of the dance always convincing.

The *Adagio*, BWV968, after the first movement of the C major Solo Violin Sonata, unfolds with a relaxed sway, leaving the impression of an especially apt and congenial transfer to keyboard. Mention must be made of the A minor Fantasia, BWV922, one of the standouts among Bach's keyboard works for the thorny challenges it poses. Papastefanou arrives at a reading that, while fundamentally serious, allows ample space for playful spontaneity. The result is a performance of considerable

virtuosity and imagination, free of fussy mannerism.

I can do little more than echo Jed Distler's enthusiasm when he wrote of her second recording of the entire *Well-Tempered Clavier* (10/18), 'Papastefanou more than holds her own alongside the catalogue's top piano versions of the "48".' If you like Bach on the piano, you'll probably take keen pleasure in these interpretations. Rather than imposing a didactic approach on her listeners, Papastefanou beckons them towards Bach by the gentle exercise of her own enthusiasm and sensibilities. **Patrick Rucker**

JS Bach

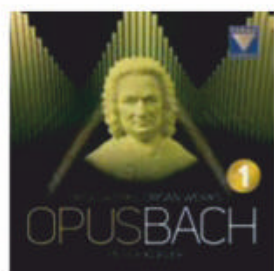
'Opus Bach - Organ Works, Vol 1'

Allabreve, BWV589. Canonic Variations, BWV769. Canzona, BWV588. Chorale Partitas - BWV766; BWV767; BWV768. Chorale Preludes - BWV654; BWV740. Concertos - BWV594; BWV596. Fantasias - BWV570; BWV572; BWV573. Fantasy and Fugue, BWV537. Fugues - BWV575; BWV577; BWV579. Kirnberger Chorales - BWV699; BWV704; BWV711; BWV714; BWV715; BWV717; BWV722; BWV729; BWV730; BWV731; BWV738; BWV741. Leipzig Chorales - BWV657; BWV658; BWV659; BWV660; BWV661. Neumeister Chorales - BWV957; BWV1112; BWV1113; BWV1114; BWV1115; BWV1117; BWV1118; BWV1119; BWV1120. Orgelbüchlein - BWV639; BWV640; BWV641; BWV642; BWV643; BWV644. Pastorale, BWV590. Preludes and Fugues - BWV536; BWV539; BWV541; BWV545; BWV548; BWV550; BWV552; BWV543. Schübler Chorales, BWV645-650. Toccata and Fugue, BWV565. Trio, BWV583. Trio Sonatas - BWV528; BWV529

Peter Kofler *org*

Farao © © B108110 (5h 58' • DDD)

Played on the Rieger organ of St Michael's Jesuit Church, Munich



The first five-disc set of Peter Kofler's projected complete Bach organ works series claims to make use of an innovative recording technology with which 'the space

of the church interior is authentically reproduced not only in its horizontal dimensions, but also in its vertical acoustics, its spatial height'. Usually sceptical of such extravagant claims, I have to say this really is a truly remarkable sound. Not well acquainted with the acoustic interior of the Jesuit church of St Michael in Munich, I cannot say how real the sound is, but it certainly envelops the playing with a wonderfully atmospheric aural backdrop, which in most cases enhances the music.

In most cases; but not all. A very brisk opening movement of the Sonata BWV529 is obscured by the acoustic wash, while the very opening of the D minor Concerto after Vivaldi (BWV596) gets quite lost in the swirling clouds of atmosphere. But the sheer sonic splendour of the A major Prelude and Fugue (BWV536) is riveting, the antiphonal effects in the last partita of *O Gott, du frommer Gott* (BWV767) are startlingly vivid, as are the solo/*tutti* contrasts in the C major Concerto (BWV594), and while there may be some reservations about Peter Kofler's interpretative approach to the ubiquitous BWV565 Toccata and Fugue, there is no arguing about the spectacularly vivid sound.

On the whole, Kofler's performances find an ideal balance between stylistic integrity and interpretative individuality, and there is little here which is going to cause offence to even the most hardened Bach specialist. At the same time, enhanced by that glorious recorded sound, Kofler's playing has a real sense of communication, portraying these works with conviction and enthusiasm supported by a splendidly robust and fluent technique.

The booklet essay draws attention to Helmut Walcha's groundbreaking recordings of Bach (on Archiv) and suggests that much has changed in the world of Bach organ music interpretation over the intervening 60 years. That is true; but while Kofler's own musical pedigree (born and studied in Bolzano and Munich before being appointed organist of the

GRAMOPHONE *talks to ...**Alexandra Papastefanou*

The Greek pianist has recorded the French Suites and discusses her approach – both musical and pianistic – to playing Bach

What are the particular challenges of playing Bach on the piano?

I have played Bach on the clavichord, the harpsichord and the fortepiano but the piano is my instrument. For me to play Bach on the piano is a contemplative experience, a part of my artistic sincerity. The challenge of playing Bach on the piano is that the piano, being such a rich and wonderful instrument, offers all the interpretative frames and possibilities for an initiation into Bach's music. Naturally the piano should be approached in a way that respects the articulation and the phrasing, as well as the codes and expressive means particular to Baroque music – as research over the last decades has shown us.

You bring quite an expressive and to some extent rhythmic freedom to Bach – is this fundamental to your understanding of the music?

I believe that the expressive power of JS Bach's music is inexhaustible: it encompasses endless possibilities, stretching infinitely over the horizons of music history. A respectful, thoughtful and at the same time sensitive reading of Bach's music is the prerequisite for a sincere and original performance. I have been deeply attracted

by the contemporary research on his music and have studied the philosophical currents of his time and the different expressive parameters of Baroque music. They both imply a certain incorporated rhythmic and expressive freedom. But a scholastic, dogmatic, academic and didactic approach would be an anachronism for me, the same as romantic 'musicalising'. We are spiritual children of the postmodern world. Spontaneity is the source of every musical expression and personal truth. If one succeeds in unveiling the inner truth of the musical work, this would derive from intellectual clarity, good taste, serious study and rich imagination. Hopefully the last word in Bach's interpretation will never be said!

Your varied approach to ornamentation, in repeats for example, is distinctive.

Yes indeed, the repeats are meant to offer a sort of varied version, and I tried through the embellishments to describe musically the dance steps, the kindness, the grace and decency of the French style combined always with the deep expressive majesty and discipline of Bach's music. It is an opportunity to give to the musical text different connotations.



What can we look forward to next? Will there be more Bach?

Absolutely! I will soon be recording the *Goldberg Variations*, which is an old dream of mine come true. As ever, this will be on First Hand Records.

church in which these recordings were made) might not immediately suggest a connection with Walcha, in the sheer musicality of the playing and the instinctive understanding of registration, his approach is not a million miles away either. Rather, his playing is more in the nature of reinvigorating a long and hallowed tradition of Bach-playing than in reinventing it.

Any complete Bach organ music survey should grab attention with the big preludes, toccatas and fugues, and demonstrate great technical virtuosity in the flexibility of the trio sonatas. This new release is certainly way up with the front-runners in those areas; a quick sample of both the E minor and E flat Preludes and Fugues (BWV548 and 552) provides ample evidence. But it is in the chorale-based works that the wheat is so often separated from the chaff. Like Marie-Claire Alain (on Erato), who could elevate

even the humblest chorale prelude through imaginative registration, Kofler uses the full resources of this glorious 75-stop 2011 Rieger intelligently and sensitively. It would have been interesting to have his registrations included in the booklet, but suffice it to say he seems to have found just the right sound for each chorale prelude and treats each one as a delightful gem in its own right. Perhaps *Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland* (BWV660) seems a touch turgid, and the Canonic Variations (BWV769) do not quite come alive, but listening to *Wachet auf* (BWV645) so vividly shot through with the spirit of dance is an exhilarating experience, while Kofler's bubbly, life-enhancing performance of *Allein Gott in der Höh sei Ehr* (BWV717) is pure joy.

There is a certain thematic basis to each disc. The first replicates mostly the programme of Mendelssohn's famous Bach recital given in Leipzig in 1840; the second

has an Advent/Christmas theme; while the remaining three discs revisit programmes Kofler devised for live performances elsewhere. Beyond that, each presents as logical a cross-section of Bach's organ output as anyone could want, and opens up great possibilities in displaying the rich resources of this splendid instrument.

All in all, from the evidence of these first five discs, this is going to be a highly recommendable recorded survey of Bach's complete organ works. The playing is very fine indeed, the organ as close to the ideal as it is possible for a modern organ to be, and the recorded sound genuinely awe-inspiring. **Marc Rochester**

Beethoven

'A Beethoven Odyssey, Vol 6'
Piano Sonatas – No 4, Op 7;
No 11, Op 22; No 12, Op 26

James Brawn *pf*
MSR Classics © MS1470 (74' • DDD)



James Brawn continues his serious progress through the Beethoven sonatas,

an MSR series which commenced in 2012, with Vol 6 devoted to three sonatas composed between 1796 and 1801.

The E flat Sonata, Op 7, emerges as strangely two-dimensional. Vivid contrasts, particularly in the dynamic realm, tend to be minimised. If *fortissimos* are sufficiently robust, *pianissimos* seldom seem truly hushed. While Brawn is generally observant of Beethoven's indications regarding legato ligatures, staccato, emphases and the like, phrases can seem directionless, missing the varieties of tension and relaxation that provide shape and contour. In the Scherzo a certain metronomic regularity of the beat prevails, minimising any innate lilt or *Schwung*.

The opening theme of the 'Funeral March' Sonata, Op 26, sounds so drab and hapless that one is left wondering why Beethoven composed even a single variation on it, let alone five. In the pressured Scherzo, pauses for breath between phrases and sections are at a premium. It's clear from his booklet notes that Brawn thoroughly understands the imagery of the 'Marcia funebre', though little of its essential drama comes through in performance.

In Op 22, a tendency to treat series of chords, motifs and figurations identically makes the ebullience of the first movement seem a bit wooden. One wishes for a greater sense of dialogue, the dynamic of statement and response. Scintillating beauty in the *Adagio* is subdued, sacrificing some of its rhetorical eloquence. Following a dutiful Minuet, the rich and varied terrain of the Rondo seems traversed with more determination than joy.

Critical response to this series has been cordial. At least in these particular sonatas, however, Brawn's readings strike me as a bit cool and literal. Other listeners may find them refreshingly objective. Nevertheless, Brawn's seriousness of purpose is never in doubt and he brings admirable technical clarity to each of these perennially fascinating pieces. **Patrick Rucker**

Mendelssohn

Capriccio, Op 5. Three Fantaisies (or Caprices), Op 16. Fantasy, 'Sonate écossaise', Op 28. Kinderstücke, Op 72. Two Piano Pieces, WoO19. Rondo capriccioso, Op 14. Variations, Op 82

Doomin Kim *pf*

Warner Classics © 9029 56797-6 (60' • DDD)



If you struggle to make some sort of sense of Doomin Kim's new Warner

Classics release of Mendelssohn's solo piano music, you're not alone. There are blithe lyrical sections, spinning uninflected melodies that seem free of emotional impetus. Passagework flies by in perfect nonchalance, heedless of any affective context. Once a tempo is established, whatever the underlying colour or mood, the music ticks by with metronomic regularity. On the basis of these performances, one could be forgiven for imagining that Felix Mendelssohn, one of the architects of musical Romanticism, was little more than an early 19th-century journeyman tracing a bland path between pillar and post.

But who is Doomin Kim? There are four photographs in the booklet, yet not a single word of biography. For that, you must look online. At the Warner website you will learn that the South Korean pianist, now 16 years old, moved to Paris in 2016, where he studies with Michael Wladkowski at the École Normale de Musique. Since the booklet indicates the recording was made in October 2017 in Bois-Colombes, France, Kim was presumably 14 at the time.

So why the rush to record? For this, Kim's advisors must answer. Mendelssohn's piano music cannot be described as off the beaten path, and therefore relatively safe territory for a newcomer. The stunning 2008 Mendelssohn disc of Bertrand Chamayou (Naïve, 10/08), which includes some of the pieces Kim also plays, comes immediately to mind. One is left to ponder whether, in encouraging Kim to record at this tender stage of his development, those responsible may have done him a grave disservice. **Patrick Rucker**

Mozart

'Complete Piano Sonatas, Vol 2'

Piano Sonatas - No 1, K279; No 4, K282; No 6, K284; No 9, K311

Jean Muller *pf*

Hänssler Classic © HC19074 (68' • DDD)



Jean Muller continues his series of Mozart piano sonatas, launched almost a year ago (4/19), when it came up against the inaugural volume of another cycle, by

Peter Donohoe. Once again, the two pianists coincide in one sonata, the D major, K311, which appears on Donohoe's second volume (Somm, 9/19). Comparisons yield similar findings: where Donohoe plays through the rhetoric – sonata as continuous discourse – Muller differentiates more keenly between phrases, often deploying minute agogic pauses to set them off from each other. Nevertheless, Muller can't match Donohoe's imaginative expression in certain speedier passages; strings of semiquavers emerge with a more shapely profile in the Mancunian's hands, as opposed to the Luxembourgish pianist's more even production.

Muller is sensitive and poetic in the slower music, such as the opening *Adagio* of the E flat Sonata, K282. His Steinway is recorded with sufficient analytic focus to reveal inner lines clearly, further distinguishing this cycle from the more generous acoustic in which Donohoe's Bechstein is captured. Perhaps the trade-off comes in a want of Mozartian playfulness, which comes through in spades in Marc-André Hamelin's recording of the same sonata's finale (Hyperion, 5/15).

All is played with sufficient style, with subtle ornamentation in reprises and a concern never to distort the music through eccentricity or point-making. Muller captures the innocence of the C major, K279, and the driving impetus of the opening *Allegro* of the D major, K284. Other favourite sets of the sonatas may illuminate more brightly the many facets of these deceptively simple works but Muller is a perceptive guide to this music.

David Threasher

Mussorgsky • Prokofiev • Rimsky-Korsakov

'Tales from Russia'

Mussorgsky Night on the Bare Mountain

(arr Rimsky-Korsakov/Chernov) **Prokofiev**

The Tales of an Old Grandmother, Op 31

Rimsky-Korsakov Sheherazade, Op 35

(arr Gilson)

Simon Trpčeski *pf*

Onyx © ONYX4191 (66' • DDD)



One doesn't necessarily have to know the plots or subtexts attached

to these 'Tales from Russia' to appreciate their musical essence. It helps, of course, to have a good narrator like Simon Trpčeski, whose keyboard prowess vividly communicates such stories without words.

In the first piece from Prokofiev's Op 31, Trpčeski salaciously gooses the rolled chords to quite different effect than in Florian Noack's relatively deadpan delivery (*La Dolce Volta*, 12/19). He also takes more time in the *Andantino*. Rather than letting No 3's steady left-hand chords dominate, Trpčeski instead allows the melody to lead, while building No 4's dotted rhythms to a riveting climax.

No question that Trpčeski's incisive fingerwork, variety of articulation and cutting-edge dynamic contrasts throughout Konstantin Chernov's *Night on the Bare Mountain* transcription generate far more excitement and drama than in Sa Chen's earlier recording (Pentatone, 12/09). That said, I prefer the scintillating drive of Igor Khudolei's leaner and lithier piano version, of which both Sergei Kasprov and Valery Kuleshov have made wonderful recordings.

In many ways the musical substance of Rimsky-Korsakov's *Sheherazade* is embedded within its brilliant orchestration. Yet somehow the late 19th-century Belgian composer Paul Gilson's solo piano version manages to lose nothing in translation. The opening salvo's rich, declamatory brass, for example, remerge in the form of intensely sculpted piano octaves, while the final movement's relentlessly swirling woodwind passages lie and fly easily under Trpčeski's

supple hands. His pearly legato alluringly captures the silvery sound of the high-lying solo violin lines and the sheer sexiness of those long-breathed solo clarinet runs in 'The Young Prince and the Princess'.

Indeed, some listeners may find the composer's own piano four-hands arrangement thick and clunky next to Gilson's 10-fingered ingenuity and subtle command of keyboard geography. Surely Trpčeski makes a compelling case for Gilson's transcription, with no small help from Onyx's lifelike sound. **Jed Distler**

Prokofiev

Piano Sonatas - No 3, Op 28;

No 8, Op 84; No 9, Op 103

Freddy Kempf *pf*

BIS (F) BIS2390 (56' • DDD/DSD)



Freddy Kempf's previous instalment of solo Prokofiev (with Sonatas Nos 1,

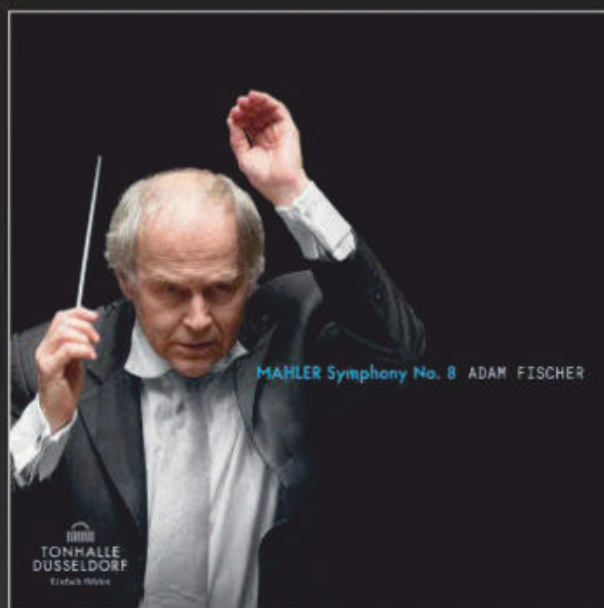
6 and 7 and some early works) in 2003 was warmly received by Bryce Morrison, who lavished particular praise on the Toccata. It seems that the *enfant terrible* Prokofiev, and his 'Toccata-ness' (as Russians like to put it) in particular, are still a great fit for

Kempf's temperament, because he relishes the exuberance and nervous energy of the single-movement Third Sonata, though in fact some steelier colours would by no means have harmed the head-over-heels, forward-looking drive of Prokofiev's rocket-like departure from the old world. The ebullient finale of the Eighth Sonata is also as buoyant and exciting as could be.

Here and elsewhere Kempf is a master at layering textures. But the Jekyll-and-Hyde characters of the Ninth Sonata are better captured when the colouristic range is wider. Whether this has to do with a quest for unity, I don't know, but the result is mere uniformity – hear Melnikov for a far more creative response to Prokofiev's enigmatic mood swings. Still, the biggest let-down of the disc is Kempf's matter-of-fact approach to the first two movements of the mighty Eighth. *Gramophone* readers hardly need to be directed yet again to the classic Richter, but even among mere mortals there are far more developed dramatic narratives to be found. Compare the opening pages from Melnikov, Kozhukhin or Yuja Wang, where each change of harmony and turn of phrase is subtly pointed and nurtured. Here and throughout the movement Kempf sounds metronomic and blunt. The recording quality is fine but in terms of Prokofiev

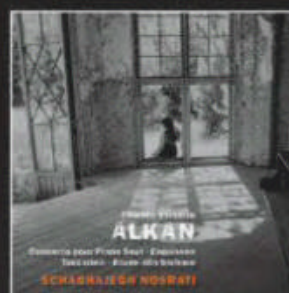


Cavi-music • The Artists' Label



Gustav Mahler
Symphony no. 8
Düsseldorfer Symphoniker
Adam Fischer, conductor

The seventh volume in Adam Fischer's multi-awarded Mahler series



Charles-Valentin Alkan
Concerto per piano solo
Esquisses
Schaghajegh Nosrati, piano

Record Review, BBC Radio 3
"Absolutely fascinating!....She has a wonderful sense of attention to detail..."



Reynaldo Hahn: String Quartet no. 2
Claude Debussy: String Quartet in G minor
Ariettes oubliées (for soprano and string quartet)
Siobhan Stagg, soprano
Noga Quartet

Der neue Merker, Vienna:
"sheer listening pleasure"



Franz Schubert
Piano Sonata D. 960, Klavierstücke D. 946
Moments musicaux D. 780
Dina Ugorskaja, piano

Pizzicato: "The last great musical achievement of a wonderful performer!"

new
arts
inter
national

DISTRIBUTED AND MARKED BY NEWARTSINT.COM & PROPER MUSIC DISTRIBUTION

proper
music distribution

interpretation the disc is only a mixed success. **Michelle Assay**

Piano Sonata No 8 – selected comparisons:

Kozbubkin (4/13) (ONYX) ONYX4111

Melnikov (2/17) (HARM) HMC90 2202

Wang (12/18) (DG) 483 6280GH

Richter (DG) 449 744-2GOR

Piano Sonata No 9 – selected comparison:

Melnikov (11/19) (HARM) HMM90 2203

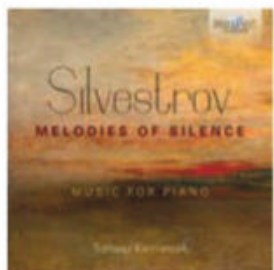
Silvestrov

'Melodies of Silence'

Five Elegies, Op 35. Melodies of the Moments, Op 145. Three Pieces, Op 9. Four Pieces, Op 63. Three Pieces, Op 80. Four Pieces, Op 97. Three Waltzes, Op 62. Two Waltzes, Op 74

Tomasz Kamieniak *pf*

Brilliant Classics ® 95921 (69' • DDD)



Valentin Silvestrov's output of piano miniatures during 2003-17 has often

been remarked on while being easily misunderstood. Begun seemingly as a distraction from large-scale works, it has resulted in some 30 hours of music and consists of several dozen cycles that comprise between two and 10 pieces. Silvestrov then organised these into 'meta-cycles', each of them lasting in excess of an hour, such as are intended to be performed as an unbroken continuity. This, along with the extremely detailed markings of expression and dynamics, makes for an experience wholly removed (whether in concept or execution) from the easy- or background-listening collections which have mushroomed across recent decades. Rather, Silvestrov has presented a challenge akin to his extended song-cycles from the 1970s and early '80s – the aim, in both instances, being to demand attention in the pursuit of a 'hidden modern-ness'.

Such, at least, is the spirit in which Tomasz Kamieniak (himself a noted composer as well as improviser) has interpreted this music. The present sequence is of eight (non-chronological) cycles of 27 pieces, duly performed with resonant pauses but no actual breaks that might tempt the listener into taking a break or even losing focus before it runs its course. Such an approach differs from that of previous such collections by Elisaveta Blumina (Grand Piano) or Jenny Lin (Hänssler, A/07) in amounting to an integral entity: what the composer terms 'symphonies of moments', played out on a grand scale. The spectrum of piano literature is referenced, thus making Silvestrov's endeavour as inclusive as it

is extensive. Kamieniak is an enlightening guide, and one looks forward to future instalments in a project like no other.

Richard Whitehouse

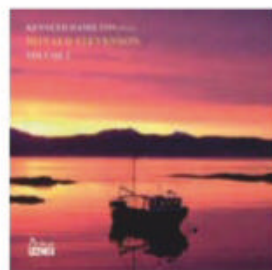
Stevenson

'Piano Works, Vol 2'

JS Bach Komm, süßer Tod **Merrick** Hebridean Seascape **Purcell** Three Grounds. Hornpipe. The Queen's Dolour (A Farewell). Toccata (all arr Stevenson) **Stevenson** Barra Flyting Toccata. Chorale-Pibroch for Sorley Maclean. Keening Song for a Makar (in memoriam Francis George Scott). Little Jazz Variations on Purcell's 'New Scotch Tune'. Norse Elegy for Ella Nygard. Recitative and Air on DSCH. Threepenny Sonatina (on Kurt Weill's Threepenny Opera). Toccata-Reel, 'The High Road to Linton'

Kenneth Hamilton *pf*

Prima Facie ® PFCD107 (74' • DDD)



Ronald Stevenson's keyboard aesthetic mirrored his role models Ferruccio

Busoni and Percy Grainger in several respects. One is that Stevenson often used other composers as a jumping-off point, blurring the boundaries between transcription and original work. Another is that Stevenson's musical ideas tend to take precedence over pianistic expediency, notwithstanding the fact that the keyboard layout is unquestionably idiomatic, if never quite so scintillating in the sense of Liszt and Rachmaninov, or Barber and Boulez for that matter.

As such, his piano works don't 'play themselves'. Kenneth Hamilton, however, seems entirely attuned to this repertoire, which comes as no surprise, given his friendship and musical association with the composer. In the *Little Jazz Variations on Purcell's 'Little Scotch Tune'*, for example, Hamilton shapes the theme in plainer terms compared to the rounded phrasing characterising Murray McLachlan's recording (Divine Art, 5/13), and brings more intensity and urgency to the chordal syncopations, although McLachlan obtains more variety in timbre and dynamics.

If Christopher Guild's interpretation of the *Chorale-Pibroch for Sorley Maclean* (Toccata Classics) benefits from an overall slower tempo and subtler string strumming, the decorative high-register passages sparkle more in Hamilton's supple hands. Hamilton also wields a lighter, more incisive touch than Guild in *Barra Flyting Toccata*. By contrast, the purring arpeggios and double notes with which Stevenson transforms Frank Merrick's faux-Debussy

Hebridean Seascape benefit from Guild's superior textural transparency.

Hamilton's authoritative performance cannot make Stevenson's rather convoluted and forced Sonatina based on themes from Kurt Weill's *Threepenny Opera* sound the least bit interesting. Yet when Stevenson reworks Purcell in his own image, the results prove more fluent and organic, and Hamilton's playing truly comes into its own. Hamilton's booklet notes not only provide first-hand insights on the composer and these works but are as detailed and informative as you'd expect from one of Romantic pianism's most knowledgeable scholars. **Jed Distler**

Weinberg

Complete Sonatas for Solo Cello

Marina Tarasova *vc*

Northern Flowers ® NF/PMA99132 (78' • DDD)



The four sonatas for solo cello are the most immediately captivating of the

series of 12 for solo string instruments that Weinberg composed from 1960 until his death. They were inspired, so it seems, by Rostropovich – the dedicatee of the First Sonata – who later turned against Weinberg, possibly disappointed by the latter's refusal to declare solidarity with the cellist's support for Solzhenitsyn. The First Sonata stands up remarkably well alongside Britten's First Suite (also Op 72, coincidentally) – as I have witnessed myself in concert. And while the asperity level in the later sonatas can be daunting at times, there is no doubt that the four of them as a whole are among the finest contributions to the genre since Bach.

Marina Tarasova has already given us a first-rate recording of the 24 Preludes alongside the Cello Concertino (12/18), and her follow-up disc is no less impressive. Her playing is generous in tone, full-blooded in expression, passionate and confident, evidently fired by love for and commitment to the music. She comes up against the premiere recordings, originally on Olympia but now available again on Naxos, by Latvian-born Joseph Feigelson, who is a touch cooler and more sparing with his vibrato. Both approaches are perfectly valid, but if forced to choose, I might stick with Feigelson, because he allows the music to speak that little bit more naturally and in more varied colours. His two-disc set with the Preludes also has the advantage of including the longer original version of the first movement



Conrad Tao brings a socio-political impulse to the programme of his latest album 'American Rage'

of Sonata No 4 on a separate track (not an option for Tarasova's disc, which is close to the 80-minute mark as it is). **David Fanning**

Comparative version:

Feigelson (NAXO) 8 572280/81 (oas)

'American Rage'

Copland Piano Sonata **Rzewski** Four North American Ballads - No 2, Which Side Are You On?; No 4, Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues

Wolfe Compassion

Conrad Tao *pf*

Warner Classics © 9029 53547-7 (59' • DDD)



The social and political issues informing the works and the programming concept of Conrad Tao's latest release, 'American Rage', are unquestionably and painfully relevant today. That said, I hope the pianist forgives my discussing this disc on a purely musical basis. He begins with Frederic Rzewski's 'Which Side Are You On?' from the composer's *Four North American Ballads*. Tao navigates the contrapuntal layers and sudden shifts of mood with impeccable workmanship and poise. He tends to round

off phrases and employ more rubato in comparison to the edgy incisiveness of Rzewski's own recorded versions, and he wields a heavier hand in the obsessive repeated syncopated sequences prior to where Rzewski indicates an optional improvised cadenza. Tao's cadenza is a far cry from Rzewski's jagged dissonance. It largely dabbles in attractive, soft-hued Impressionism, although the murmuring repeated chords may well relate to those in Rzewski's Piano Piece No 4 (1977).

Interestingly, the first movement of Copland's Piano Sonata conveys the kind of rhythmic focus and forward momentum I missed in the Rzewski. Tao generates an attractively conversational lyricism and flow in the interplay between the *Vivace*'s spidery right-hand lines and anchoring left-hand chords. By any standard Tao's *Andante sostenuto* is intelligently paced and well sustained, yet the big pillar-like chords don't quite hit you with the gritty impact Leo Smit made in his pianistically shaggier yet musically devastating Columbia Masterworks recording (Sony, 6/81).

The first 2'25" of Julia Wolfe's *Compassion* alternates simple ostinatos with outbursts of clusters. Then ostinatos and clusters join forces, pounding away for several minutes, before softly retreating

back to ostinato-land. The music is easy to follow and doesn't overstay its welcome, although Wolfe's piano-writing can't begin to match Rzewski's idiomatic resourcefulness.

The fourth and final *North American Ballad* from Rzewski's set, 'Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues', may be the so-called new piano music repertoire's Chopin A flat Polonaise, in that more and more young pianists trot it out in competitions and record it by the droves. Tao plays the notes perfectly but his overly fast tempos undermine the music's sardonic undercurrents and dynamic surprises. For example, his somewhat facile treatment of the opening bass clusters doesn't suggest the grinding, hypnotic persistence of Rzewski's HatArt label performance, while his Chopinesque shaping of the blues episode misses the stylish point here. In other words, Tao promises more 'rage' than he delivers. **Jed Distler**

"B" Like Britain

Bax Hardanger. Moy Mell (The Happy Plain). The Poisoned Fountain **Bennett** Divertimento **Bowen** Theme and Variations, Op 139 **Britten** Two Pieces, Op 23

Ludmila Berlinskaya, Arthur Ancelle *pfs*
Melodiya © MELCD100 2565 (60' • DDD)



The first thing to note about this intriguing disc is the eye-catching cover: the two pianists pictured in front of one of my country's iconic images from the past: a red telephone kiosk. For the Russian piano duo this represents Britain; but ironically, though the programme is of works for two pianos by four British composers whose names begin with B (hence the disc's title, "B" Like Britain'), only Bowen's sounds unmistakably British.

The second thing to note is the disconcerting acoustic of the first five tracks (Bax and Britten) due to the placement of the microphones at what sounds like the back of the audibly empty Grand Hall of the Moscow Conservatory. The result is a far from pleasantly engaging recorded piano tone. Bax's *Hardanger* (1927) begins and ends in an exuberant Norwegian pastiche; *The Poisoned Fountain* (1928) which follows boasts a weirdly unattractive texture (I thought I was somehow inadvertently playing two unrelated tracks simultaneously). This and *Moy Mell* (*The Happy Plain*), 'an Irish tone poem' (1916), are not items I shall return to readily. Next is Britten in that same reverberant acoustic, a lively account of the 'Introduction and Rondo alla burlesca' paired with the 'Mazurka elegiaca', a work recorded on an old Decca 78 by the composer and Clifford Curzon but which remains irredeemably dour for this listener.

And then things pick up. Recorded, from the sound of it, at a different session and with a slight but beneficial change of microphone positioning, York Bowen's Theme and Variations (1951) is a revelation and, arguably, the best-written piece here. Whereas the others you can imagine in orchestral garbs, this is piano qua piano. Berlinskaya and Ancelle play the theme, its nine variations and 'interlude' superbly – and their dispatch of the exhilarating *con fuoco* finale will give you goosebumps. Their ensemble and sensitive phrasing throughout the disc are remarkable. Here, they are outstanding.

Finally we have Richard Rodney Bennett's 1974 Divertimento, an entertaining quartet of pastiches of very un-British dance movements (samba, country blues, ragtime, hard rock), again expertly and effectively laid out for two pianos, now definitely of their time. 'Groovy' is the word that springs to mind.

Jeremy Nicholas

'Encores'

Albéniz/Godowsky Tango, Op 165 No 2 **Albéniz/Séverac** Navarra **Granados** Goyescas – No 4, Quejas, ó La maja y el ruiseñor **Grieg** Lyric Pieces: Op 12 – No 1, Arietta; No 2, Waltz; No 5, Folk Song; Op 38 – No 1, Berceuse; Op 43 – No 2, Lonely Wanderer; No 4, Little Bird; No 6, To the Spring; Op 47 – No 4, Norwegian Dance; Op 54 – No 1, Shepherd Boy; Op 65 – No 6, Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen; Op 68 – No 3, At Your Feet; No 5, Cradle Song **Mompou** Scènes d'enfants – No 5, Jeune filles au jardin **Paderewski** Nocturne, Op 16 No 4 **Purcell** Hornpipe, Z T685 **Rachmaninov** Preludes, Op 32 – No 10; No 12 **Rubinstein** Mélodie, Op 3 No 1 **D Scarlatti** Keyboard Sonatas – Kk64; Kk377 **Scriabin** Poème, Op 32 No 1 **Sgambati** Mélodie de Gluck **Shostakovich** Three Fantastic Dances, Op 5 **Stojowski** Vers l'azur, Op 39 No 1 **R Strauss/Godowsky** Ständchen, Op 17 No 2

Nelson Freire *pf*

Decca © 485 0153 (77' • DDD)



The idea of a studio disc of encores is a little odd, given that the essence of the

genre is to follow the main event and offer moments of spontaneous marvel and delight, feeding off the emotions already hanging in the air. Nelson Freire's chosen pieces are, in effect, rather encores to his own long career (70 years, according to the booklet). To mark this milestone, he offers a fragrant bouquet of works, each with a personal association, as he tells James Jolly in an interview on the *Gramophone* website, either with his youth or with a particular pianist – from Guiomar Novaes (for Purcell's *Hornpipe* and the Strauss/Godowsky *Ständchen*) to Horowitz (Scriabin's *Poème* in F sharp minor).

Much as the interpretations are wrapped in Freire's own personal charisma, they are not necessarily revelatory. The opening Sgambati transcription of the Dance of the Blessed Spirits from Gluck's *Orfeo ed Euridice* certainly has a more natural flow than in, say, Hélène Grimaud's exaggerated account (DG); but Yuja Wang (DG) achieves a far subtler balance and more refined pianism. Scarlatti's D minor Sonata is surprisingly fast and agitated, with none of the charm and grace of Aldo Ciccolini's 1958 recording. Freire makes convincing cases for Paderewski's Nocturne and Strauss/Godowsky's *Ständchen*, but the latter could still do with more crystalline clarity.

At the heart of the programme are 12 Grieg *Lyric Pieces*, each here depicted as a delightful tableau. But for real magic, we

need to turn to Kozhukhin (Pentatone, 9/19), who brings these pictures to life as if in a Pixar movie, or to Andsnes (EMI/Warner, 4/02), who adds a dusting of Nordic legend. Similarly in Scriabin I miss the ethereal capriciousness of Horowitz. Following the two Rachmaninov Preludes, the selection of pieces is exquisite and truly encore-like. Compared to Volodos's melancholy (Sony, 8/13), Freire finds more childlike innocence in Mompou's 'Jeunes filles au jardin'; both approaches are equally delicious. The Albéniz/Godowsky Tango is charming and sensual – though no match for Cherkassky's pure wizardry (Decca). Freire's take on the ferociously taxing Albéniz 'Navarra', though still slightly laboured compared to Alicia de Larrocha's (Decca), has enough sunshine to make up for anyone's vitamin D deficiency.

Michelle Assay

'I, Clara'

'Clara Schumann: A Life in Music'

Brahms Ballade, Op 118 No 3. Intermezzo, Op 118 No 1 **Chopin** Nocturne No 5, Op 15 No 2 **Liszt** Un sospiro, S144 No 3 **Mendelssohn** Song without Words, Op 62 No 6 **C Schumann** Geheimes Flüstern hier und dort (arr Liszt). Konzertsatz (exc). Polonaise, Op 1 No 1. Prelude, Op 16. Romances – Op 5 No 3; Op 11 No 1 **R Schumann** Arabesque, Op 18. Erster Verlust, Op 68 No 16. Intermezzo, Op 26. Kind im Einschlummern, Op 15 No 12. Piano Sonata No 2, Op 22 – 1st movt. Romance, Op 28 No 2. Widmung, Op 25 No 1

Lucy Parham *pf* Harriet Walter *narr*

Deux-Elles © (two discs for the price of one)

DXL1179 (97' • DDD)



Clara Schumann knew a thing or two about multitasking. As the mother of eight

children by her husband Robert, she was the breadwinner of the family, deriving her income from her career as the pioneer of female concert pianists. She cooked ('Liszt came from Weimar for the dinner, my first dinner as a housewife ...') and managed the upbringing of her children. Her indomitable spirit saw her through a forbidden courtship and an absence of over two years from Robert while he was in an asylum in Endenich.

'I, Clara' sets her story in the wider context of her tours from London to Moscow, where her fame preceded her husband's, much to his chagrin. She was the soloist in both the Mendelssohn piano concertos as well as her husband's. She considered Wagner a passing fancy,



Nelson Freire offers a fragrant bouquet of encores, a varied selection of works with which he has a longstanding personal affinity

Liszt and his women indecent; but then came the rare and beautiful Brahms, though she relates his attentions towards her were misunderstood.

Harriet Walter delivers a blessedly undevout reading of Lucy Parham's narration, her timing impeccable, her manner untheatrical. It's a shame that her voice is recorded a little too close for comfort, throwing up a few idiosyncracies in her delivery. The dry acoustic is in marked contrast to the setting of St Peter and St Paul's Church in Albury, Surrey, where the piano pieces, six of them by Clara, were recorded. The Fazioli, an instrument with a strong lower register, is admirably suited to this repertoire, as Lucy Parham's heartfelt performances make clear. The first movement of the Sonata in G minor, phrased as if by a singer, with a touch of rubato and dextrous fingerwork, makes one yearn for a complete recording. Parham's *Arabesque* smiles in the way that we're told London audiences experienced when Clara Schuman played it to them. This celebration of her life, with the music fitting the narrative so well, is another fine tribute to this remarkable woman in her bicentenary year.

Adrian Edwards

'... nobody move ...'

'Commissions and Premieres for the New Gallery Concert Series'

Holland The Intimacy of Harmony **Hughes** Avoidance Tactics No 1. Vestibulations - Suite No 1 **Hyla** Solo Cadenzas from My Life on the Plains **Liu** Never Has Been Yet **Rakowski** Three Préludes **Woolf** ... nobody move ...

Sarah Bob *pf*

Avie © AV2401 (64' • DDD)



Curated by Sarah Bob, the New Gallery Concert Series has been

combining new music and visuals for the edification of those in and around Boston, with this release a selection of the pieces heard. For the most part, these work well on their own terms. Randall Woolf's high-powered toccata is redolent of the encores with which Yvar Mikhashoff closed his recitals, while Jonathan Bailey Holland favours a more introspective and latterly hieratic expression. David Rakowski's insinuating trio of preludes recalls Gershwin in its rhythmic verve if not melodic fecundity,

whereas a suite of études drawn from Curtis K Hughes's compendium *Vestibulations* focuses on miniatures at once pithy and tangible. As arranged by the pianist, Lee Hyla's piece deftly elides between keening virtuosity and an affecting emotional poise.

So much for the hits. Less successful is the lengthier offering from Hughes, failing to live up to its stated fusion in its rather generalised piano textures and with an electronic component not so much 'lo-fi' as inept. A pity, too, that Shaw Pong Liu could not have made more out of Langston Hughes's starkly accusative poem than what results here, alternating between anodyne intoning and uniform chanting that seem more a somniference than an incitement. In such instances a missing visual element may well be crucial, making one hope that future releases from this source would be in DVD format. For the most part, though, this proves a stimulating overview of an enterprising project, with Sarah Bob a dextrous and charismatic exponent. Certainly the photographs in the booklet suggest everyone was having a good time.

Richard Whitehouse

Donnacha Dennehy

It's hard to pigeonhole this Irishman's music, says Liam Cagney – and when he arrived on the scene it was like a breath of fresh air

The only country to have a musical instrument as its national emblem is Ireland, and it's the harp (familiar to many from that other Irish emblem, Guinness). For Irish composers, though, music's emblematic status is a mixed blessing. How can a composer work freely when music, freighted with symbolic status, is fixed in the formation of national identity?

When Donnacha Dennehy arrived on the music scene, some were accordingly confused by his unorthodox Irish music. In place of lyricism there was grit; in place of green pastures, neon streetlights (Dennehy: 'I've never been that pastorally influenced'). Reviewing his 'Elastic Harmonic' CD, Arnold Whittall described it as 'streetwise, soulless, hymning the urban jungle and having nothing to do with pastoral escapism, nostalgia or spirituality'. Yet this was precisely why so many found Dennehy to be a breath of fresh air. Technical precision was combined with imaginative brilliance.

This new phase seemed a turning away from dissonance towards a more palatable neo-tonalism

Dennehy's early music draws on post-minimalist, experimental and electroacoustic influences. *Streetwalker* (2003) for ensemble trudges along with repeated stabs and octaves in the piano, groans in the winds, syncopated thuds in the double bass and distorted electric guitar. *O* (2002) for orchestra – all insistent pulses and woozy glissandos – is pummelling in the same way as the experimental rock bands heard in Dublin basement venues. Dennehy spoke of 'taking the class out of classical', and with its rock sheen his music had more youthful appeal than much other Irish art music. In 2005, Ireland's national broadcaster RTÉ aired a special television programme charting the rehearsals for the RTÉ National SO commission that was Dennehy's *Elastic Harmonic* (2005), a non-traditional violin concerto based on hypnotic rhythmic loops and, typically, featuring unusual elements such as paper clips affixed to the violin's strings. Performed by Ioana-Petcu Colan, the piece showed the country that rarest of things – an Irish classical composer in the public eye.

Dennehy's family background, while not classically inclined, encouraged his artistic interests. As a teenager he was fascinated by Stockhausen and discovered Philip Glass and Steve Reich through David Bowie. In 1996, following studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and a period in the Netherlands, Dennehy returned to Ireland with the idea of a

DENNEHY FACTS

1970 Born in Dublin, August 17

1992 Awarded Fulbright Scholarship to undertake graduate studies at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

1996 Following further studies in the Netherlands, returns to Dublin and begins teaching at Trinity College

1997 With Andrew Synnott and Michael Seaver founds Crash Ensemble

2005 Elected to Aosdána, Ireland's national academy for creative artists

2007 Portrait disc 'Elastic Harmonic' released on NMC

2010 Song-cycle *That the Night Come*, written for Dawn Upshaw, premiered in Dublin

2013-14 Composer-in-residence with Fort Worth SO, Texas

2014 Moves to US to join music faculty at Princeton University

2015 First opera, *The Last Hotel*, premiered at Edinburgh International Festival

2016 Vocal work *The Dark Places*, written with novelist Colm Tóibín, premiered to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising

2017 *The Second Violinist*, wins €150,000 Fedora Generali Prize for Opera



new music ensemble. Inspired by the models of Bang on a Can and the Orkest de Volharding, Crash Ensemble was born (1997). 'The main aim behind setting up the Crash Ensemble was to have a new music group, and

to present a different type of new music, in a new way, that had not been heard and seen in Ireland up to that point,' said Dennehy in an interview. 'We were particularly interested in work that combined acoustic playing with other things such as amplification, electronics and visuals.' He enlisted pianist Andrew Synnott and clarinetist Michael Seaver in founding Crash Ensemble, and following a sold-out first concert in 1997 attended by the group's spiritual godfather Louis Andriessen, the group established a loyal following in a Dublin transformed by economic prosperity. Its aesthetic influenced a whole generation of young Irish composers and musicians. If up till 2000 the predominant influence on young Irish music was Europe, after the foundation of Crash Ensemble the scales tipped to the US. This moment was, in Dennehy's phrase, that of the 'new Irish classical'.

Yet Dennehy was not so easily pigeonholed. Anticipating jagged edges at the premiere in Dublin of his song-cycle *That the Night Come* (2010), I was surprised to hear a work of lyrical neo-romanticism. His choice of texts (six poems by WB Yeats) exhibits standard Celticism. As soprano Dawn Upshaw, watched from the walls of the Irish Museum of Modern Art by portraits of Anglo-Irish nobility, sang the lines of 'The White Birds' (beginning, 'I would that we were, my beloved, white birds on the foam of the sea!'), her gentle minor scales delicately backed by piano and flute, I felt that something had changed. Having turned 40, Dennehy was now more interested in sincerity. 'There has been a real problem in contemporary classical music



of this “ironic detachment” from feelings,’ Dennehy said in 2011. ‘My music has become more unbridled emotionally.’

This new phase seemed a turning away from dissonance towards a more palatable neo-tonalism. But as musicologist Nicole Grimes has pointed out, Dennehy from his earliest works had engaged with standard-bearers of tradition. In 1993 he composed *Two Yeats Songs* and *An Even Amount of Odd*, which sets texts by Seamus Heaney, Samuel Beckett and Paul Durcan. What is sure is that Dennehy’s new phase coincided with Irish national soul-searching following the financial crash in 2008. From the orchestra-and-choir work *Hive* (2005) onwards, too, there came a more prominent place for spectralist-influenced microtones.

Grá agus bás (2007) for singer and ensemble merges post-spectralist and post-minimalist techniques with the style of Irish folk singing called *sean-nós* (Gaelic for ‘old style’). Inspired by the microtonal inflections of this ethnic vocal music, Dennehy explores the titular themes of love and death in a rousing work that draws much material from the traditional Irish song ‘Aisling Gheal’ (‘Bright Vision’). Whereas *sean-nós* is usually introverted and hushed, here it is amplified as if in ‘widescreen’. Dennehy distinguished his exploration of traditional Ireland from that of composers who ‘exploit it for commercial gain’. Nonetheless, the traditional subject matter broadened his musical appeal both in his native country and his adopted United States (where he moved to take up a teaching post at Princeton University).

Following *Grá agus bás*, Dennehy again drew on the talents of *sean-nós* singer Iarla Ó Lionáird in his ‘docu-cantata’ (or ‘docu-opera’) *The Hunger* (2012–16; revised 2019), for soprano, *sean-nós* singer, vintage recordings, electronics, video interviews and ensemble. Using a format not dissimilar to Reich’s *The Cave* (1993), *The Hunger* focuses on the cataclysm of the mid-19th-century Irish famine. Dennehy uses text from *Annals of the Famine in Ireland* by American missionary Asenath Nicholson, which records what she saw

during her time in Ireland. He draws parallels with the present day by framing the famine as a calamity based on economic failings, juxtaposing vintage recordings of *sean-nós* music with interviews conducted with Noam Chomsky and various economists. In *The Hunger*, the *sean-nós* singer, says Dennehy, symbolises a ‘voice for the voiceless’ – redressing the situation whereby, owing to the country’s abject privation, no Irish person of the time wrote an account of the famine. In 2019, *The Hunger* underwent a transformation as a staged dramatic work, more akin to an opera.

It was with his first opera proper, *The Last Hotel* (2015), a collaboration with playwright Enda Walsh, that Dennehy originally moved into dramatic stage music. It’s located in a grotty hotel and focuses on marriage tension and assisted suicide, the gritty material much of the time buoyed by pulsating, luminous music; it was well received when premiered at the Edinburgh International Festival. His second opera, *The Second Violinist* (2017), containing more microtonal writing, was more successful again, winning the 2017 Fedora Generali Prize for Opera. Dennehy is currently working on a new opera, *Custom of the Coast*, with Pulitzer Prize-winning poet Paul Muldoon. The result is keenly anticipated.

Lately, I corresponded with Dennehy. In my review of a recent disc I had mentioned that by contrast with earlier abrasive works like *Glamour Sleeper* (2002) his recent music embraces the centre ground. He wished to correct me. ‘Despite my abiding interest in intricacies of structure and pitch-rhythmic explorations,’ he said, ‘I also have a very emotional and visceral connection to writing music, which often results in my veering, sometimes even in the same work, between the communicative and experimental.’ The line between communication and experiment is, to be sure, a tightrope that any true artist must walk. Dennehy has walked it with bravura style. **G**

DENNEHY’S STYLISTIC PHASES ON CD

Walking the line between communication and experiment



‘Elastic Harmonic’

Tatiana Koleva *perc* Darragh Morgan *vn* Joanna MacGregor *pf*
Ensemble Intégrales; Crash Ensemble; RTÉ National
Symphony Orchestra / Gavin Maloney
NMC (9/07)

This is *the* collection of the early works that marked Dennehy’s arrival as a composer, marrying downtown attitude, classical discipline and surreal humour.



‘Grá agus bás’

Dawn Upshaw *sop* Iarla Ó Lionáird *voc*
Crash Ensemble / Alan Pierson
Nonesuch (8/11)

Dennehy’s first Nonesuch disc marked a new phase: thematic seriousness, engagement with ethnic music and an Irish thematic focus were its hallmarks.



‘The Hunger’

Katherine Manley *sop* Iarla Ó Lionáird *voc*
Alarm Will Sound / Alan Pierson
Nonesuch (A/19)

Originally performed as a ‘docu-cantata’, *The Hunger* was recently produced as a dramatic work at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin. A new concert version was created specially for this recording. The work displays the same maturity evident in each of Dennehy’s operas, making use of his post-minimalist and spectralist training.

Vocal



Edward Seckerson enjoys a colourful album of Offenbach:
'We're gifted a bottle or two of bubbly to chronicle Offenbach's glittering career in musicals, sorry, operettas' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 79**



Rob Cowan admires Jan Garbarek's work with The Hilliard Ensemble:
'The way one piece echoes the last or pre-echoes the next is the stuff of creative genius' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 82**

Brahms

Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45
(London version – sung in English)
Michelle Areyzaga *sop* **Hugh Russell** *bar*
Madeline Slettedahl, Craig Terry *pfs*
Bella Voce / Andrew Lewis
Naxos © 8 573952 (66' • DDD • T)



Contributions to the booklet from Katy Hamilton and the conductor Andrew

Lewis make a persuasive case for this downsized, vernacular version of the *German Requiem*. Apparently playing four-hands on a single piano, Madeline Slettedahl and Craig Terry set the sober mood and the steady pace of the second movement's obsequies. They are unfailingly sensitive to Lewis's rubato in the movements of repose, but an air of the rehearsal room lingers all the same. Perhaps the sound of the piano itself is at fault – hollow and tonally parched – but that doesn't account for the heavy-handed imitation of timpani rolls to open the third movement, or the prosaically clipped articulation to accompany Michelle Areyzaga, who breaks her opening line in the middle and initially sounds none too comfortable as a bestower of maternal or angelic peace.

Both she and Hugh Russell sing with wider vibrato than we are now used to in this music, making an awkward fit with the designedly English-cathedral style of the choir. This is a well-blended, Chicago-based outfit of 34 voices, fielding a mixed alto section that Brahms would surely not have envisaged, and slightly stronger in the upper than lower parts. Still, moments of strain in a work of chorally exigent demands are few and far between, and if the accustomed contrasts of scale are minimised in the Requiem's two great narrative pillars, placed third and sixth, so they are in almost every other 'London version' recording.

The exception to the rule, it seems to me with a little hindsight, is the Delphian recording with the Choir of King's College London (12/17). Joseph Fort's direction is more strongly marked, his soloists in fresher and more appealing voice, his pianists much more harmoniously recorded. Their sung text is the Victorian-era Traquair/Benson version, with discreet tweaks to the underlay, whereas Bella Voce use a recent translation prepared by Lara Hoggard, a contemporary of Robert Shaw who died in 2007.

Without recourse to iconoclasm – the fourth movement's dwellings are as lovely as ever – Hoggard's translation is subtly updated ('you' rather than 'ye'), more faithful to the Biblical text and often falling more gratefully on the voice and the musical sense of the phrase, if not always the ear. To focus on the soprano solo, there is no doubt that 'Grieve not' makes for a more singable expression than 'Howbeit', but 'You' closes the vowel unhelpfully at the opening of the phrase, while 'and I have found' cannot be counted an improvement on the distinct definition of 'but at the last' in the same place. In sum, 'the spirit speaks', but at *mezzo-forte*.

Peter Quantrill

Dowland

'Whose Heavenly Touch'

All ye, whom love of fortune hath betray'd.
Can she excuse my wrongs. Come again!. Come away, come sweet love. Come, heavy sleep. Fine knacks for ladies. Flow, my tears. Go crystal tears. If my complaints could passions move. In darkness let me dwell. I saw my lady weep. Mignarda. Now, O now, I needs must part. O sweet woods. Sorrow, sorrow stay. Wilt thou unkind thus reave me

Mariana Flores *sop* **Hopkinson Smith** *lute*
Naïve © E8941 (57' • DDD • T)



When you think of the Argentinian soprano Mariana Flores you think of Monteverdi,

Cavalli, Vivaldi, maybe even Frescobaldi. But Dowland? English lute songs may be closely related to their Italian cousins but these are two musical families with a vastly different spirit and approach to life. I'd love to say that Flores's attempt to bridge the divide brings them closer together or finds new insights in familiar repertoire, but neither would be strictly true.

Flores's chameleon-voice can take her from rasping, rough-edged fury to blowsy sensuality but here is straitjacketed into uncomfortably close, vibrato-less confines. White, wan sweetness is all that's on offer, a sound so carefully controlled as to make Emma Kirkby look extravagant. It's old-fashioned, more-English-than-the-English singing whose refusal to release is made all the more frustrating by the faultless quality of Flores's diction and pronunciation.

Just a little more Italy or Spain in the mix and we could have had quite a different recital. The interplay between Flores and lutenist Hopkinson Smith is lively, and Smith's delicate variations through strophic songs like 'Come away, come sweet love' and 'Now, O now, I needs must part' inflect each verse with care, tugging gently on the ear. But each time theatricality or coy irony is needed ('Fine knacks for ladies', 'Come away, come sweet love') we get only straight-faced delivery from both voice and lute – an unfairly severe representation of a composer with enough wry humour to write his own 'Semper Dowland, semper dolens' punchline.

This is a classic Dowland recital, working its way from 'Flow, my tears' to 'In darkness' – a recital already available hundreds of times over. I'm afraid there's little being said here that hasn't already been said before, and better. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Dvořák

Stabat mater, Op 58 B71

Julia Kleiter *sop* **Gerhild Romberger** *contr* **Dmitry Korchak** *ten* **Tareq Nazmi** *bass* **Julius Drake** *pf*
Bavarian Radio Chorus / Howard Arman
BR-Klassik © 900526 (59' • DDD • T/t)
Recorded live at the Prinzregententheater, Munich, March 1 & 2, 2019



Highly disciplined: the Choir of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh, and Duncan Ferguson sing devotional works by Kenneth Leighton – see review on page 77



The timing given above is no misprint. Neither has Howard

Arman made a Hervé Niquet-style dash through a score stained with soft tears. So where has the rest of it gone? In fact Dvořák composed this uncommissioned, seven-movement *Stabat mater* in 1875 after the death of his daughter Josefa, just two days old. Having lost two more children, the now-childless 36-year-old composer returned to the score in the autumn of 1877, inserted three movements after the fourth section and orchestrated the whole work.

Bearing in mind the lengthy introductions to each movement, Dvořák may have had a full orchestral canvas in mind for the original version, but he wrote out a fully notated piano part which is beautifully modulated here by Julius Drake. Placed forwards in the mix, he brings a Schubertian lilt to the underlying rhythm of 'Eja mater' that no performance of the bass-heavy orchestral version can emulate. The excellent Bavarian Radio Chorus are encouraged to phrase accordingly, and the advantages of a compact, professional chorus in a work usually belonging to the choral-society tradition make themselves felt throughout.

Required by the text and the nature of its setting to pitch their contributions between 'The Shepherd on the Rock', Verdi's Requiem and Dvořák's own *Moravian Duets*, the soloists make a well-matched team slightly let down by an unduly Italianate tenor. Best of them are Gerhild Romberger, a firm and consoling presence in the 'Inflamatus', and Tareq Nazmi, sensitively shading his long and rhetorical scena in 'Fac ut ardeat'. In these respects and most others, the new recording surpasses its only rival on record, made a decade ago in a much drier acoustic by Accentus and Laurence Equilbey, with Drake's pianism the outstanding advantage. **Peter Quantrill**

Comparative version:

Accentus, Equilbey (NAIV) V5091

Gesualdo

Gesualdo Secondo Libro di Madrigali.

O dolorosa gioia, and madrigals by

d'India, Macque, Nenna and Tagliavia

La Compagnia del Madrigale

Glossa © GCD922809 (68' • DDD • T/t)



The past few months have opened up a rich seam for Gesualdo

enthusiasts, with an impressive new release from Exaudi (Winter & Winter, A/19), the launch of a complete madrigal cycle from Les Arts Florissants (Harmonia Mundi, 12/19) and now this from La Compagnia del Madrigale, which edges closer to completing its own (including the recordings issued as *La Venexiana*). It seems to me that they have taken time to properly hit their stride, but here they rediscover the heights scaled with Claudio Cavina at the helm. These are near-flawless readings, effortlessly poised and formally legible. Their responses to textual and musical cues are never overdrawn but subtle and even humorous (the sense of ensemble at 'subito sparve' in 'All'apparir di quelle luce' forces admiration, but also a smile). And they draw out the composer's early and enduring gift (which he shares with Monteverdi) of emphatically satisfying endings ('In più leggiadro velo', 'Hai rotto e sciolto').

The comparison with Les Arts Florissants, whose most recent offering includes the first two books, is particularly instructive. I entirely share Edward Breen's enthusiasm for it; in fact, I cannot remember having been so astonished by madrigal performances in a very long while. Les Arts Florissants are recorded live in a comparatively dry acoustic which leaves the singers nowhere to hide, like a painter working on unprimed canvas; and

yet they take the music down risky pathways, playing chicken with the notion of ensemble and somehow convincing one that such raw immediacy was what Gesualdo and his audience must have prized. Less polished than their Italian counterparts, their performances presage a truly groundbreaking cycle.

But there's another reason to invest in La Compagnia's recording, which includes a very generous helping of madrigals by lesser-known but crucial figures. More than mere bonus tracks, they situate Gesualdo in his proper environment. As to a choice between the two accounts, there's little point. I only wish that other early vocal repertoires were as embarrassingly well served. **Fabrice Fitch**

Handel

'Handel Uncaged – Cantatas for Alto'

Amore uccellatore, HWV176/175. Figli del mesto cor, HWV112. Stanco di più soffrire, HWV167a. Udite il mio consiglio, HWV172

Lawrence Zazzo *countertenor*

Jonathan Manson *vc/va da gamba* **Andrew**

Maginley *theorbo/gtr* **Guillermo Brachetta** *hpd*

Inventa © INV100 (74' • DDD • T/t)



Part recital and part musical detective drama, 'Handel Uncaged' is, ironically,

entirely captivating. At its centre is a premiere Handel recording that is both new and familiar – a cantata-cycle that shifts our perspective not just on the work itself but on the cantata as a genre.

Puzzled by the incoherent narrative and abrupt ending of Handel's cantata *Vedendo amor*, HWV175, the countertenor Lawrence Zazzo was directed by scholar John Roberts to the Fitzwilliam manuscript that includes the piece as just one section in a five-part cantata-sequence, *Amore uccellatore*, which also includes *Venne voglia*, HWV176. Featuring an unprecedented 10 arias and lasting over half an hour, the first-person sequence (whose authorship was formerly in doubt) tells the story of a lover repeatedly trapped by 'birdcatcher' Cupid and his flock of seductive women.

Questions of how the sequence might originally have been performed are discussed in Zazzo's extensive booklet note; but the issues are resolved here through the interpolation of instrumental movements by Handel between sections to smooth any awkward harmonic joins. Zazzo himself makes an engaging narrator, taking us seamlessly from the playful opening 'Venne voglia', through the colourful, lively

storytelling of 'Vedendo amor' through to the more melancholy conclusion (the narrator's 'tail' is lost, rendering him of no interest to lusty Cupid).

Zazzo, skilfully supported by Jonathan Manson (cello and gamba), Andrew Maginley (theorbo, guitar) and Guillermo Brachetta (harpsichord), sounds fresher than ever here in music that celebrates his feathery softness and roundness of tone. There's no strain and not a sharp edge in sight in this pastoral sequence, whose highlights include the lovely 'Camminando lei pian piano' (a near relation of *Cesare*'s 'Va tacito') and 'Trupz ci ci', with its vivid imitation of birdsong. If there's a lack of blade to climactic moments of anger or bitterness, it's perhaps only appropriate to this pastel-coloured musical fantasy world.

Instrumental interludes taken from Handel's sonatas and suites offer necessary textural contrast (the percussive crunch of Brachetta's harpsichord is particularly welcome), helping to amplify the scope of a cantata that, if it's not knocking on the door of full-scale opera, certainly makes its case here as a diverting solo serenata.

Alexandra Coghlan

Henze

Das Floss der Medusa

Camilla Nylund *sop* **Peter Schöne** *bar* **Peter Stein** *spkr* **Freiburg Cathedral Boys' Choir; SWR Vocal Ensemble; WDR Radio Chorus; SWR Symphony Orchestra / Peter Eötvös**

SWR Classic © SWR19082CD (69' • DDD • T)



This beautifully prepared recording issues the most compelling if belated

of invitations to consider afresh a seminal work of the 1960s and assess how successfully it survives the circumstances of its scandalously aborted premiere. Andrew Porter was our man on the scene in Hamburg, and he filed a piece of understated reportage well worth digging out of the *Gramophone* archives (4/70). Porter and others had little but praise for the recording taken from the final rehearsal and quickly issued by DG, but Henze himself later reflected ruefully on its deficiencies, 'the performers not giving their all but saving themselves for the actual performance, the conducting, singing and playing all matter-of-fact and calculated'.

It would be easy but naive to cast our own minds back wistfully to a time when a piece of new music mattered enough to attract flag-waving students and a division

of riot police in their wake. Unnecessary, too, when Henze's 'documentary oratorio' (one of several subtitles, both officially and informally bestowed upon it) acquires baleful congruence with the fate of refugees washing up on the shores of the Mediterranean, in a dreadful echo of the events in 1817 immortalised by Géricault, whose painting lent its title to the work of the composer and his librettist, Ernst Schnabel.

Peter Stein is an inspired piece of casting as the narrator Charon: wry, grizzled and self-directed with every syllable, informed by decades of experience directing others. The choral contributions from both adults and children are also irreproachable, and Camilla Nylund is no less radiantly secure than Edda Moser as the personification of Death who welcomes the poor souls on the raft into her embrace, one by one. In the role of Jean-Charles, the banner-waving African crew member in Géricault's painting and the sole survivor of the raft, Peter Schöne may sing with less inflected sophistication than Fischer-Dieskau but his delivery restrains the piece from lapsing into bathos at moments such as the arioso with children chanting Dante (now in ensemble rather than a pair of solo voices as specified and recorded by Henze). The recording from Hamburg's Elbphilharmonie may not convey the literal procession of souls across the stage as vividly as the original recording but it draws out more of Henze's rich orchestration, electric guitar and all, and wraps the voices in a realistic concert-hall ambience.

Henze always liked to keep distinguished company, and the oratorio's debts to the Passions of Bach have been overstated. For all its diffuse and over-saturated harmony, and its ready resort to quick and dirty dramatic gestures, the patchworked, two-part design of his 'Requiem for Che [Guevara]' is better understood as a 'taking back' of Beethoven's Ninth as first conceived by Adrian Leverkühn, the composer of Mann's *Doktor Faustus*. When he put it on at the BBC Proms in 1977, Robert Ponsonby requested of Henze that he mute the shouts of 'Ho-Chi-Minh' which brought this 'oratorio militare e volgare' to its indignant conclusion and, thought Ponsonby, dated the piece. Henze recorded the change in his 1990 revision, which the scant performances since then have observed. Nevertheless, like Nono's *Intolleranza 1960* and Zimmermann's *Requiem for a Young Poet* (1967-69), the power of its protest survives undimmed.

Peter Quantrell

Selected comparison:

Henze (4/70^R) (DG) ➔ 449 871-2GC

Leighton

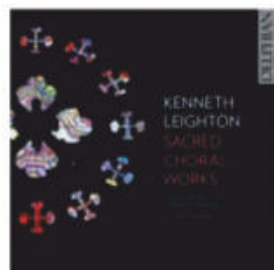
'Sacred Choral Works'

Awake my glory. Crucifixus pro nobis. Lift up your heads, O ye gates. Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child. Missa Sancti Petri. Of a rose is all my song. O sacrum convivium. Wassail all over the town. What love is this of thine?

Samuel Jenkins *ten* **Choir of St Mary's Cathedral, Edinburgh / Duncan Ferguson**

with **Joseph Beech** *org*

Delphian © DCD34218 (80' • DDD • T/t)



Time to be honest about Kenneth Leighton. He loved Howells as much as

the rest of us; but while Howells's music is often more enjoyable, Leighton's is often far better. The booklet notes prove a little reluctant to describe it in terms of its own technical qualities and distinctive features: lyrical counterpoint; cellular transformation, like metamorphosis; the superimposition of jagged shapes and forms at staggered intervals, many of them rooted in dance (evident from the first seconds of this recording's first track, the premiere recording of *Lift up your heads*). Leighton was a radical whose music springs from tiny charges of musical tension (premonitions of Adès) which in turn delivers taut, disciplined, intelligent, devotional works that are fittingly reverent even when roaring with frightening power.

There are two standout highlights on this recording from a choir Leighton knew and conducted. First, the cantata *Crucifixus pro nobis*, a miniature Passion as thorny as it needs to be (even when it sounds, on the surface, like a pastoral). Samuel Jenkins, the keening tenor soloist, comes into his own in 'Christ in his Passion' above Joseph Beech's twisting organ. Second is Leighton's *Missa Sancti Petri*, written for Peterborough Cathedral Choir in 1987 and clearly thematically derived from the composer's seminal Second Service of a decade and a half earlier. It has that work's knotty intensity, the spiralling architecture inducing its own terror. There's the slightest sense, in the atmosphere and in Jenkins's occasional nasal vowel, of a work more French than English.

Of the motets that surround those works, the highlights come early: *Lift up your heads* and *Awake my glory* – the latter's fidgety twists and turns have the composer's fingerprints all over them as it fizzes through a soaring poem by Christopher Smart. One or two of the pieces from the 1980s aren't so convincing and his most famous, the *Lully, lulla*, isn't representative.

The children of St Mary's Choir might not have the purity at the top of their register that characterised the choir's first recording for Duncan Ferguson – fortitudinous, driven Taverner (3/10). But this is still recognisably St Mary's: no-nonsense singing, highly disciplined yet projected to the back wall and laid over well-behaved adults with well-supported voices. Do Leighton the service of thinking of this as a follow-up to the same choir's Stravinsky disc (10/16). **Andrew Mellor**

Monteverdi

Vespro della Beata Vergine (1610)

Claire Lefilliâtre *sop* **Fiona McGown** *mez* **Francisco**

Mañalich, Sébastien Obrecht, Pierre-Antoine

Chamien *tens* **Arnaud Richard, Renaud Bres**

basses **La Tempête / Simon-Pierre Bestion**

Alpha © ② ALPHA552 (142' • DDD • T/t)



It takes beats, not bars, to realise that we're not in Venice anymore with this new

recording of Monteverdi's 1610 *Vespers*. Or maybe we are, but it's certainly not the marble-fronted, coolly classical city so many accounts of this work would suggest. La Tempête's Venice is all cosmopolitan collisions, the crossroads of Europe – busy, dirty, bustling with as many prostitutes as priests.

There were clues. First, the running-time of this two-disc set – not the normal 80 or 90 minutes but well over two hours of music. And then there was Simon-Pierre Bestion and La Tempête's previous recording, their bold 'Azahar' (5/17), pairing Machaut's *Messe de Notre Dame* and the Stravinsky *Mass* (complete with unusual overlap of performing forces). Authenticity holds little interest for Bestion, who admits frankly in his booklet interview that this *Vespers* bears little resemblance to any Monteverdi might have heard or even imagined, even if he did originally intend this disparate, non-functionally liturgical group of works as a coherent whole.

Taking advantage of many of the movements' lack of specified orchestration, Bestion fills out the texture with a rich combination not just of harpsichords, harps, theorbos and cornetts but also sackbuts, citterns and even a serpent, intended to echo the distinctive call of the Jewish shofar. And then there's the music itself, often expanded with additional repetitions and filled out with unexpected interpolations; the opening Toccata from *Orfeo* makes an arresting intrusion into the opening sequence, and elsewhere a

Frescobaldi *Ricercar sopra Sancta*

Maria creeps in – a demure prelude to Monteverdi's more exuberant Sonata.

The style of performance is as irreverent and wide-ranging as the musical material. The opening chant, 'Domine ad adjuvandum me', bursts acid in the ear, all pitch-bending swoops and frank, folk-like brightness and brilliance of tone. The many ululating ornaments here (and throughout) draw more on Byzantine and Orthodox traditions than on Western Renaissance and Baroque music, fretting at repeated pitches with chromatic quivers and plenty of modal colour.

What does it all add up to? A disorientating ritual of daunting scope and size, but one whose distinctive point of view and unapologetic delivery are hard to gainsay. The ensemble-singing can be a bit rough at times and the solo voices are chosen for character rather than classical purity, but this all adds up to some undeniably exciting moments, like the joyous 'Gloria Patri' conclusion to the 'Laudate pueri', where unison men come joyously close to football-crowd brashness. Judged against its own quirky standards, Bestion's account makes its case. My only quibble would be that all this novelty and colour can sometimes make the moments of unadulterated Monteverdi seem a little pallid by comparison. **Alexandra Coghlan**

Ockeghem

'Complete Songs, Vol 1'

Anonymous *En attendant vostre venue*

Barbingant *Au travail suis que peu de gens*

croiroient Ockeghem *Aultre Venus estes sans*

faillie. D'un autre amer mon cuer s'abesseroit.

Fors seullement contre ce qu'ay promis/Fors

seullement l'actente. Fors seullement l'actente

que je meure. Ma maistresse et ma plus grant

amye. Mort tu as navré de ton dart/Miserere.

O rosa bella. Permanent vierge/Pulcra es/Sancta

dei genitrix. Quant de vous seul je pers la veue.

S'elle m'amera/Petite camusecte. Se vostre cuer

eslongne moy a tort

Blue Heron / Scott Metcalfe

Blue Heron © BHCD1010 (77' • DDD • T/t)



In 1982 Decca Florilegium issued the first-ever recording of Ockeghem's entire secular music with the Medieval Ensemble of London (10/82). At that point, much of the music had never appeared in a modern edition, so the idea of Ockeghem as a composer of songs was new. Almost 40 years later, with the music long published in several editions, we are



JOHANNES OCKEGHEM COMPLETE SONGS VOLUME 1

The first volume of a set of two containing all of Ockeghem's songs, last recorded complete in the early 1980s.

The second disc will be released circa 2022.

SCOTT METCALFE, DIRECTOR

BLUE HERON

GRAMOPHONE CLASSICAL MUSIC AWARDS
WINNER 2018
EARLY MUSIC

Look for it on Amazon.com or wherever you get your music.

www.blueheron.org

member of WFIMC/WFCIM

53

INTERNATIONAL CLASSICAL GUITAR COMPETITION

September 21 - 26, 2020

MEDAL President of the Republic
from 1997

PRIZE CITTÀ DI ALESSANDRIA

FIRST PRIZE
CD RECORDING NAXOS INCLUDED: € 10,000

DEADLINE AUGUST 31, 2020

michele pittaluga

IDAGIO
Official Audio Recording Partner

WORLD FEDERATION
OF INTERNATIONAL
MUSIC COMPETITIONS

12th

international classical guitar composition competition

Deadline July 31, 2020 Final September 26, 2020

www.pittaluga.org

Classics + Direct

Gramophone Choice Recordings

Disc of the month

Bach CPE	Oboe Concertos	Löffler, Alte Musik Berlin	£11.50
Bach JS	Opus Bach: Organ Works 1 (5cd)	Peter Kofler	£22.50
Brahms	Piano Concerto 1, Four Ballades	RNS, Vogt	£11.50
Brahms #	The Final Piano Pieces	Stephen Hough	£11.00
Gesualdo	Secondo libro di madrigali	Compagnia Madrigale	£12.00
Gomes	Lo Schiavo (DVD)	Vassileva, Neschling	£24.50
Lully	Isis (2CD)	Les Talens Lyriques, Rousset	£13.00
Strauss R	Don Quixote, Don Juan etc.	Oslo PO, Petrenko	£12.00
Vaughan Williams	Symphonies 3 & 4	BBC SO, Brabbins	£11.00
	In Nomine II	Fretwork	£11.50

Recent Recommended Releases

Bartók	+ Korngold Piano Quintets	Goldner Qt, Lane	£11.00
Beethoven	Symphonies 5 & 7	Manze	£11.50
Beethoven	Late String Quartets (3cd)	Brodsky Quartet	£21.00
Charpentier	Orphée aux enfers	Vox Luminis, Meunier	£11.50
Elgar	Cello Concerto	Kanneh-Mason, LSO, Rattle	£11.00
Goossens	Phantasy Concerto, Symphony 2	Little, A. Davis	£11.00
Handel	Agrippina (3cd)	DiDonato, Emelyanychev	£22.50
Mahler	Symphony 4	Sampson, Vänskä	£11.00
Mahler	Symphony 8	Nézet-Séguin	£11.00
Saint-Saëns	Piano Concertos 3 & 5	Lortie, BBC PO, Gardner	£11.00
Stanford	String Quartets 1, 2 & 6	Dante Quartet	£11.00
Strauss R	Alpensinfonie, Tod & Verklärung	Oslo PO, Petrenko	£12.00
	The Complete DG Recordings (58cd)	Abbado	100.00

Free Monthly New Release & Special Offer Listings

We accept payment by Visa / MasterCard / Cheque

Postal Charges UK - First item £1.50, then £0.50 per item Box Sets £3.00
Maximum UK postage charge = £3.00

Europe - First item £2.00, then £1.00 per item Box Sets from £2.50

Outside Europe at cost Prices valid until 28.02.20 and include VAT at 20%

Office Hours Monday - Saturday 9.00am - 5.00pm Answerphone on Wednesdays

Orders: 01787 882223 Classics Direct

91 North Street, Sudbury, Suffolk, CO10 1RF. UK E-mail: sales@classicsdirect.co.uk
www.classicsdirect.co.uk to view our special offer listings

now familiar with the notion of Ockeghem not only as a song composer but as one of the best. Building partly on their success in last year's *Gramophone* Awards, at which they took the Early Music prize, Blue Heron are issuing Ockeghem's complete songs on two CDs, of which this is the first (and word has it that a parallel set is planned by the West Coast group Cut Circle: watch this space).

The signal virtue of Blue Heron's Ockeghem is that they give the music room to breathe: this has always been rare in performances of 15th-century song and it pays instant dividends. Innumerable unfamiliar details come out of these performances. One only wishes that the articulation of the texts had been as clear as we knew from Margaret Philpot and Rogers Covey-Crump on the 1982 set. But, to compensate, these are performances of absolute clarity, beautifully in tune, beautifully balanced and beautifully recorded. Most of the time they use only solo voices, which obviously contrasts with earlier versions and seems to me uniformly successful; but occasionally they add a harp and in one case (Ockeghem's *O rosa bella* duo) they use two vielles.

They field a dozen singers, all of whom are extremely good, though I would be inclined to single out Margot Rood as the one who always adds excitement to her singing – with just a little more vibrato than the others, but no harm in that when the results are so compelling.

The CD appears with copious documentation and excellent new translations of all the texts. A major new step in the enjoyment of 15th-century song. **David Fallows**

Offenbach

Six Fables de La Fontaine^a. Boule de neige – Overture; La valse du divorce^a. Les bavards – Overture; C'est l'Espagne^a. Les deux aveugles – Overture. Madame Favart – Overture. Monsieur Choufleuri – Overture. Schüler Polka^a **Karine Deshayes** *mez* **Orchestre de l'Opéra de Rouen Normandie** / **Jean-Pierre Haeck**
Alpha Ⓢ ALPHA553 (56' • DDD • T/t)



The shocking pink packaging says it all. If Offenbach had a colour then this might be it. Then there's the quirky illustration of besuited animals relating, of course, to the *Six Fables of La Fontaine* – newly minted in bright, often fragrant orchestrations from the conductor of this jolly album, Jean-Pierre Haeck.

Originally for voice and piano, these infectious salon pieces are more scenes than songs – dress rehearsals, if you like, for Offenbach's stagey career to come. And I think the highest compliment one might pay to Haeck's orchestrations is that they sound every inch as if the settings were imagined this way. The texts wear their morality lightly, very lightly, and in that vein the vocal lines are fashioned with the joy of singing them written into every phrase. As always with Offenbach, they combine an obligatory showiness with the ease of a master craftsman. And that's the pleasure of the soloist Karine Deshayes – a characterful mezzo with a rangy top and the essential twinkle in her eye.

For the rest we're gifted a bouquet of overtures and a bottle or two of bubbly to chronicle Offenbach's glittering career in musicals, sorry, operettas. As befitting the original German-French purveyor of *Strictly Come Dancing* numbers – though more for the ballrooms of the elite than our contemporary Blackpool equivalent – the music of these is replete with all manner of waltzes, polkas and insidiously catchy galops. And the essence of them is in the style – well versed by this conductor and his gamely receptive Orchestra de l'Opéra de Rouen Normandie – wherein the charm of the tunes depends upon how easily they slip off collective bows and the energy is all in the spring of the rhythms. So we can hear castanets without their actually being present in the Spanish-inflected footwork of *Les bavards*; we can try to resist bobbing to the infectious *allegros* of the *Madame Favart* and *Boule de neige* overtures and imagine that the wistful cello solo of *Les deux aveugles* is a very personal farewell to the days when Offenbach made his living from playing that instrument.

Might the concluding *Schüler Polka* be Offenbach not so discreetly cocking a snook at that member of the Strauss family? Perish the thought. **Edward Seckerson**

Sibelius

Kullervo, Op 7
Johanna Rusanen *sop* **Ville Rusanen** *bar* **Estonian National Male Choir; The Polytech Choir; Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra** / **Hannu Lintu**
Ondine Ⓢ ODE1338-5 (72' • DDD/DSD • T/t)



The worst possible preparation for *Kullervo* is, arguably, Sibelius's later symphonies and tone poems, all of which Hannu Lintu and his Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra have given us over

the past five years. As Sibelius refined and distilled his voice, he moved stylistically further and further from this megalomaniac score, which explains his withdrawal of it.

Thomas Dausgaard's recent recording from Glasgow revels unashamedly in the work's uncouth aspects: its vernacular accent, its rough edges, its unlikely transitions and its sheer unwillingness to be anything particular. This new recording from Helsinki is thicker, plusher and richer (with far more imposing choral singing from male choirs straddling the Gulf of Finland, which is welcome) but neither as vivid nor as revealing. You sense how well the Finnish Radio Symphony Orchestra know the piece and have 'dignified' it with 20th-century thinking, just as much as you hear Dausgaard's BBC Scottish Symphony apparently intrigued by its oddities and revelling in them (they also did their research on the folk music, which transforms movements such as 'Kullervo goes to War').

Soprano Johanna Rusanen is strong but her tuning can waver and she doesn't live the story like Dausgaard's Helena Juntunen. Her real-life and onstage brother Ville Rusanen has the edge on Benjamin Appl in the title-role but his fearsome 'Voi poloinen' loses shock factor with a comparatively flabby orchestral underlay. Osmo Tapio Räihälä's booklet note starts with Bruckner, who was on Sibelius's mind around 1890, and the comparison stretches to the performance – that organic, rolling smoothness that has made so many of Lintu's recordings of later Sibelius so highly recommendable. Osmo Vänskä in Minnesota gives you comparable richness with just a touch more articulation and scene-setting to help tell the story (and a more weighty chorus). Dausgaard's thinner chorus is a disadvantage but he gets closer to the rowdy core of this score than most.

Andrew Mellor

Selected comparisons:

Minnesota Orch, Vänskä (4/17) (BIS) BIS9048

BBC Scottish SO, Dausgaard (8/19) (HYPE) CDA68248

Wolfe

Fire in my Mouth
Young People's Chorus of New York City; The Crossing; New York Philharmonic Orchestra / **Jaap van Zweden**

Decca Gold Ⓢ 481 8606 (48' • DDD)

Recorded live at David Geffen Hall, Lincoln Center, New York, January 24-26, 2019



Julia Wolfe's music often draws on America's chequered cultural and social

history as subject matter for compositions which – in terms of sheer expressive impact, weight and punch – force us to rethink and reconsider the way in which the past is presented. Latterly, Wolfe's focus has been on industrial America during the long 19th century, with works ranging from folk hero John Henry in *Steel Hammer* to the coal miners of north-eastern Pennsylvania in her powerful 2015 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Anthracite Fields*.

In *Fire in my Mouth*, Wolfe's gaze falls on the many young immigrant women who arrived on American shores from war-ravaged European countries around the turn of the 20th century in the hope of a new life, only to end up in circumstances that were hardly better than the ones they fled. Many female workers were shoved into the latter-day equivalent of factory sweatshops, enduring extremely long hours in appalling conditions. Apathy and negligence towards the struggle of these immigrant workers eventually led to a fire that swept through the Asch Building in New York on March 25, 1911, resulting in the deaths of 146 workers.

The 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire forms the basis of this large-scale four-movement work for choir and orchestra. The opening movement, 'Immigration', starts positively enough. Excitement is conveyed through a swathe of sweeping orchestral gestures, tinged with wide-eyed wonder and a certain naivety as to what lies ahead in the chorus's declamatory lines. The sense of anticipation is soon shattered in the second movement, 'Factory', where pounding strokes on percussion, scraping strings and bludgeoning stabs on winds and brass present us with a hellish vision of the factory floor. The workers' voices rally against injustice in the third movement, 'Protest', but the horror of the second movement takes on a harrowing twist in the final section, 'Fire', where the factory women suffocate in the swooning heat and smoke of the fire. In a gesture resembling John Adams's naming of the victims of the 9/11 attack in *On the Transmigration of Souls*, the workers who perished in the 1911 fire are recounted in the final section, punctuated by bell-like strikes in percussion, harp, piano and electric and bass guitars.

Hope, depression, anger and sorrow: *Fire in my Mouth* takes us through the various stages of grief but its main message – of fairness and equality to all humans, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender or background – is one that remains worryingly relevant to our times, and one that is communicated with sobering urgency, energy and immediacy in Wolfe's gripping work. **Pwyll ap Siôn**

'Evensong Live 2019'

Byrd The Great Service – Nunc dimittis **Finzi** Lo, the full, final sacrifice **Hadley** My beloved spake **Ley** A Prayer of King Henry VI **Mathias** Jesus Service, Op 53 – Magnificat **Maw** One foot in Eden still, I stand^a **Parry** I was glad. Service No 2, 'The Great' – Magnificat **Rubbra** Service in A flat – Magnificat^a **Stanford** Service in B flat – Nunc dimittis. Service in G – Nunc dimittis **Walton** A Litany **Weelkes** Short Service – Magnificat **Weir** Ascending into Heaven **C Wood** Oculi omnium. Service No 2 in E flat – Nunc dimittis^b
The Choir of King's College, Cambridge /
Sir Stephen Cleobury, ^bBen Parry,

^a**Christopher Robinson**

King's College, Cambridge © KGS0038
(79' • DDD • T/t)

Recorded live, May 2018 – May 2019



If you've followed the 'Evensong Live' series you'll know that the 'live' bit is more

accurate than the 'Evensong' bit. There are no psalms, hymns, responses or prayers here, just meaty anthems and canticles harvested from services captured on King's in-house recording apparatus. Here, we are in the last days of the Stephen Cleobury regime, with two works conducted by Christopher Robinson (who stood in while Cleobury underwent surgery) and one by Ben Parry. You can change the man in the middle, but you can't change the 'King's sound'. Not in a matter of weeks, anyway.

That sound is one many of us have known for a lifetime and which lays itself bare on the choir's weekly webcasts, where these recordings were first published. Love it or loathe it, this choir has never looked you in the eye like its counterpart at St John's. Its sound is an imperial one, with a sometimes cavalier brand of aloof confidence that can wave away musical intuition, true blend of tone and vowels and even accuracy of tuning.

Text comes second to both sound ideals and the top line (bolstered by the acoustic), whose 'floating' tone can't help but reduce the range of colours deployed. Weir's *Ascending into Heaven* is diminished for that reason. Old habits die hard; the sudden burst of *fortissimo* vibrato on the first 'Maaaaag-nify' of Parry's *Great Service* betrays a lack of interest, underneath the trebles, in letting the line build naturally; the Weelkes *Magnificat* is bereft of considered interpretative thought (again, focusing on text would help).

But King's is King's, and its steadfast traditions – of sound production as much as procedure (as in the wholly counterintuitive

pointing of its psalter) – is its wonder. Finzi's *Lo, the full final sacrifice* rises and falls like yeast, even if its big chords obstinately refuse to settle. We get a taste of the choir's bodily luminosity in Ley's *Prayer of King Henry VI*, a King's speciality delivered with a hint of atmosphere. The choir's cold, brittle sound springs the Mathias *Magnificat* nicely out of its blocks and shows the extent to which ensemble and organist know how to utilise the space. Even in those problem corners, the choir's nobility is propulsive and distinctive. Cleobury's was a remarkable, historic, tenure on so many fronts and the tragedy of his untimely death has been felt even by those who never came into contact with him. He is already proving a near-impossible act to follow, but there's no doubting the Daniel Hyde era offers a serious opportunity for renewal. Many will be listening closely. **Andrew Mellor**

'From Darkness Into Light'

Anonymous Ave maris stella. Jesus autem cum ieiunasset. Multiplicati sunt qui tribulant me. Salve regina. Verbum caro factum est a 4 **Brumel** Lamentationes Hieremiae prophetae, in feria sexta Parasceve **Compère** Paranympheus salutatur virginem **Josquin** Recordare virgo mater **Moro** Sancta Maria succurre miseris
Musica Secreta / Deborah Roberts, Laurie Stras
Obsidian © CD719 (73' • DDD • T/t)



A tale of two Florentine manuscripts copied by the scribe Fra

Antonio Moro leads the intrepid musicologist Laurie Stras to create another superb album with Musica Secreta. The first manuscript yields the complete Lamentations for Good Friday by Antoine Brumel (c1460-c1512), previously recorded by The Tallis Scholars (Gimell, 9/92), when only the verses beginning with letters Heth and Caph were known. Stras's discovery almost doubles the length of the work and delightfully complicates its function. Falling, now, into five sections, liturgical performance seems unlikely, pointing instead to devotional use. Musica Secreta begin rather carefully, the almost equal part-ranges suiting their mix of female voices as singers' personalities delicately delineate vocal lines. The work, and indeed the performance, really begins to reveal its true richness at the first refrain, 'Ierusalem convertere ad Dominum Deum tuum'. Supported by the gentle uplift of Claire Williams's organ-playing and the sinewy tone of Alison Kinder's viol, the



From Darkness Into Light: Musica Secreta bring a wonderful radiance to Lamentations by Antoine Brumel

sopranos find a sweet resonance as they lean into the phrases without losing overall blend. The result is a wonderfully radiant sound that allows individual voices to ring through.

The second manuscript yields a collection of choral music for the entire liturgical year of a nunnery, much of it anonymous. Musica Secreta select eight motets including works by Josquin, Compère and the scribe himself. Of these, two anonymous works stand out: *Jesus autem cum ieunasset*, for its direct portrayal of Jesus's hunger after fasting, and the closing *Salve regina*, for its luscious web of imitative polyphony. Again, the equal registers suit this ensemble so well: frequently they create soft swirling textures around points of imitation coloured by the timbres of their voices. It's warm, nimble and compelling throughout. As so often with Musica Secreta, the meeting of inspired musicology with passionate and committed performance generates something way beyond the sum of its parts. **Edward Breen**

'New England Choirworks'

Esmail This Love Between Us, 'Prayers for Unity'^a **D Hill** God be in my head **Kellogg** Shout joy! **Olson** Magnificat^b **R Williams** A New England Symphony

Yale Schola Cantorum / David Hill with ^a**Rabindra Goswami** sitar ^a**Ramchandra Pandit** tabla ^b**Elm City Girls' Choir**; ^a**Juilliard 415**

Hyperion © CDA68314 (75' • DDD • T/t)



A casual listener tuning into a selection of today's contemporary choral music may easily be led to believe that only two choices are available: luxuriate in the warm tonal afterglow of an Eric Whitacre or Morton Lauridsen, or chance your luck with the challenging vocal sounds of more avant-garde composers such as Evan Johnson, Cassandra Miller and James Weeks. In truth, some of the most interesting examples occupy a middle ground between these two polarities, as heard on this richly rewarding recording of choral works sung by Yale Schola Cantorum under David Hill.

Stacked tonal clusters have become something of a choral cliché in recent years. Likewise vocal sounds and timbres from outside the mainstream classical tradition. Both techniques are heard in the Canadian composer Tawnie Olson's *Magnificat*, yet are used here with a clear purpose in mind – to communicate a

message through the Latin text about female strength and empowerment. Yale Schola Cantorum are joined by the Elm City Girls' Choir in a taut, focused setting that revolves around a series of colourful antiphonal exchanges between the two female choruses. The non-classical vocal elements are heard in Olson's adoption of a singing sound and style reminiscent of Bulgarian women's choruses, which represents, in the composer's words, 'female strength and determination'.

A different kind of determination underpins Roderick Williams's *A New England Symphony*. This four-movement work for unaccompanied voices draws on the stories of early American settlers' determination to survive in a new and often hostile environment. Williams's first-hand knowledge of vocal writing – his distinctive baritone voice will be familiar to many – is evident throughout, such as in a haunting second movement ('By night when others soundly slept'), where delicate whole-tone textures are employed to evoke unconditional love in Anne Bradstreet's religious poem.

Williams writes with a Britten-esque clarity of choral sound that is not always present in Reena Esmail's large-scale *This Love Between Us*. Esmail's ambitious seven-movement work sets seven prayers from

around the world and visits not only familiar faiths such as Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism, Christianity and Islam but also some of its oldest, including Zoroastrianism and Jainism. Throw into the mix a chorus and orchestra comprising both Western and non-Western instrumentation (sitar and tabla feature prominently in several movements), and it's perhaps no surprise that the music struggles at times to strike a neat balance between all elements. Nevertheless, the work is a significant addition to another important middle stream in choral music (with Roxanna Panufnik arguably its most important practitioner to date), where multicultural musical elements are combined within a multi-faith context.

Pwyll ap Siôn

'Nowell synge we both al and som'

'A Feast of Christmas Music in Medieval England'

Anonymous Alleluya: A nywe werk. Alma redemptoris mater: As I lay. Angelus ad virginem. Ave rex angelorum. Benedicite Deo. Cantate Domino. Ecce, quod natura. Edi be thu, heven queene. In natali novi regis. Lullay, lullay: Als I lay. Mervele not, Joseph. Nowell, nowell, nowell. Nowell: Now man is bryghter. Nowell: Owt of your slepe. Nowell synge we bothe. Puer natus est nobis. Resonet, intonet. Ther is no rose. Veni, O sapientia **Cooke** Ave regina caelorum **Dunstable** Gaude virgo salutata **Frye** Ave regina caelorum **Power** Sanctus **Queldryk** Gloria

Gothic Voices

Linn © CKD591 (77' • DDD • T/t)



It seems extraordinary that this should be Gothic Voices' first

Christmas-themed album; nevertheless, it has been worth the wait to hear these well-known works performed by this ensemble. Choosing music for the Advent and Christmas season, including the Feast of the Annunciation (commonly referenced at Christmas in medieval times), Gothic Voices certainly don't shy away from much-loved treasures such as the 14th-century *Angelus ad virginem*, where solo verses alternate with sprightly three-part harmony. Their textures are always buoyant: listen for the fourth verse, which describes the Virgin's swollen womb, where they use an atmospheric vocalised drone.

This Annunciation storytelling vibe continues as Gothic Voices revisit *Nowell nowell, nowell* ('This is the salutacion of th'

aungell Gabriell'), previously recorded by Leigh Nixon with a crystal-edged clarity (Hyperion, 2/97). This new performance has solo verses sung by Julian Podger with similarly striking early pronunciation but less angularity. The refrains are performed with all four voices in unison suggesting a more celebratory tone. Elsewhere carols with obvious rejoicing are warmly performed; take, for instance, the anonymous 15th-century *Alleluya: A nywe werk is come on bonde*, which has fluidity and familiarity but avoids the more extrovert style of, say, Trio Mediaeval (ECM). Smooth too is the beautiful performance of *Edi be thu, heven queene*, Steven Harold's solo verses displaying a similar flow to John Potter with The Dufay Collective (Chandos, 2/96), yet Gothic Voices' all-vocal approach again incorporates vocalised harmonies, which creates a most attractive cushion of sound.

The works recorded here are grouped thematically such that plainsong, carols and motets all expand on central themes. The Christmas section contains familiar carols to satisfy all audiences including *Lullay, lullay: Als I lay* and *Ther is no rose of swych vertu* but also gems of true Gothic Voices territory such as Queldryk's (*fl* c1400) *Gloria* and a *Sanctus* by Leonel Power (d1445). The *Gloria* in particular is a model of nimble, thrilling performance. Living up to their new tagline, 'unaccompanied close medieval harmonies', this album will surely become a firm seasonal favourite.

Edward Breen

'Remember me, my dear'

Anonymous Dostoino est. Procendentem sponsum. Procurans odium. Remember me, my dear. Sanctus **Brumel** Agnus Dei **Garbarek** Allting finns. We are the stars **Hildegard of Bingen** O ignis spiritus **Kedrov** Litany **Komitas** Ov zarmanali **Le Rouge** Se je fayz deuil **Pärt** Most Holy Mother of God **Pérotin** Alleluia nativitas

Jan Garbarek *ssax* **The Hilliard Ensemble**

ECM New Series © 481 7971 (78' • DDD)

Recorded live at the Collegiate Church of SS Pietro and Stefano, Bellinzona, Switzerland, October 16, 2014



Hilliard Ensemble, Garbarek the Blakean serpent weaving among the angels. Their groundbreaking first album, 'Officium' (10/94), imaginatively conceived by ECM's founding producer Manfred Eicher, was

Once heard, never forgotten, Norwegian saxophonist Jan Garbarek and The

Classic FM's third big hit (Henryk Górecki and Gavin Bryars provided the first two), an ethereal visitation with street cred, 'Hill Street Blues in church' as I used to call it, as if gritty cops from some unnamed metropolis were seeking solace in a large, sacred space, in this case the Chiesa della Collegiata dei SS Pietro e Stefano, Bellinzona, Switzerland.

This is their fourth album, following on from 'Mnemosyne' and 'Officium Novum' (5/99, 11/10), the pattern, now as then, a mix of early music, some modern music and improvisation where, according to The Hilliards' David James (I quote from Steve Lake's informative booklet note), 'Jan never ever looks at the piece of music we have. So he has no idea of the form and length. We just start it. Yet somehow he senses the shape of the piece and seems to know, to have this sixth sense of where it's going ...'. And it's that same musical symbiosis that informs the programme under review, recorded during the group's last tour in 2014 (you hear the occasional shuffle and the programme is tailed by applause), often revisiting items from previous albums, familiar in tone but different in terms of articulation. A good place to sample would be the sequence of tracks 6-8, starting with the conclusion of an anonymous *Sanctus* which ends with Garbarek playing solo, then morphs into Arvo Pärt's beautiful, intimately voiced *Most Holy Mother of God* (here The Hilliards perform on their own) before Garbarek picks up the thread for another anonymous piece, *Procendentem sponsum*.

The way one piece echoes the last or pre-echoes the next is the stuff of creative genius and makes each of ECM's four programmes eternally durable. On the penultimate track, *Agnus Dei*, Garbarek roams into the far distance then doubles back to join The Hilliards in an intimate musical embrace for the closing *Remember me, my dear*, from which the album takes its name. And while as a rule this latest collection (14 tracks in all) promotes a unique brand of quiet piety, there are exceptions, not least Pérotin's gaily skipping *Alleluia nativitas* and an especially challenging rendition of Hildegard's *O ignis spiritus*, which seems to reflect the painful image: 'Holy are you, anointing the broken; Holy are you, cleansing the festering wounds.' Not that the booklet (which includes fine additional notes by Paul Griffiths and Gordon Jones) gives you texts or translations. You'll need to acquire those from elsewhere; but in all other respects this beautifully engineered disc concludes a four-album trans-millennial tale that helped define meaningful music



An equal partnership: Robin Tritschler and Malcolm Martineau bring an easy eloquence to songs by Beethoven, Mozart, Schubert and Weber

for a generation. It 'crosses over' while maintaining integrity on both sides of the divide and deserves to reach the widest possible audience. **Rob Cowan**

'Song's First Cycle'

Beethoven *An die ferne Geliebte*, Op 98

Mozart *An die Einsamkeit*, K391. *Ich würd' auf meinem Pfad*, K390. *Verdankt sei es dem Glanz der Grossen*, K392 **Schubert** *Lieder aus der 'Selam'*, D302-308. *Einsamkeit*, D620

Weber *Die vier Temperamente bei dem Verlust der Geliebten*, Op 46

Robin Tritschler *ten* **Malcolm Martineau** *pf*
 Signum © (two discs for the price of one)
 SIGCD587 (83) • DDD • T/t



Robin Tritschler and Malcolm Martineau explore the early history of the song-cycle in this thoughtful recital, which flanks Beethoven's *An die ferne Geliebte*, the first acknowledged work in the genre, with sets of songs that can either be viewed as the cycle's precursors or were written in imitation. Tritschler provides the scholarly booklet notes himself, cogently arguing that Mozart's songs from

Timotheus Hermes's then popular novel *Sophiens Reise* form a striking portrait of a man whose capacity for self-deprecation results in tragic isolation from humanity. He also carefully examines whether Weber's *Die vier Temperamente* should be regarded as a genuine cycle or a set of songs linked by the common theme of thwarted love, that can be performed in any order, or indeed individually.

The jury is seemingly out, meanwhile, on whether Schubert's seven songs to poems from the 'Selam' almanac, written in a single day (October 15) in 1815, constitute 'a mini song-cycle', as designated by Walther Dürr, editor of the *Neue Schubert-Ausgabe*, though the set is underpinned by the idea, essentially derived from Plato, that human love affords access to the divine. There can be little doubt, though, that Schubert's enormous 1818 Mayrhofer setting 'Einsamkeit', more a cantata for voice and piano than a song, takes *An die ferne Geliebte* as a point of departure, and that both its six linked sections and Schubert's use of comparable piano figurations refer directly back to Beethoven's cycle.

Tritschler sings his programme as eloquently as he writes about it. Pride of place inevitably goes to the Beethoven, where he combines something of Fritz

Wunderlich's warmth with Christian Gerhaher's altogether darker introspection (Sony, 10/12), and is beautifully alert to the cycle's constant shifts of emotion and mood, a quality that similarly informs his intense performance of 'Einsamkeit'. The Weber set, characterised by an almost operatic immediacy, is by turns flippant, sorrowful, ironic and desperately sad. Tritschler's ease and beauty of tone are very much apparent in his Mozart, while his telling yet understated way with words comes to the fore in the 'Selam' songs, where the extended strophic forms are apt to seem repetitive if not as carefully handled as they are here.

He and Martineau, meanwhile, very much form an equal partnership, and you get a real sense of almost instinctive give and take between them, above all in *An die ferne Geliebte*, where the accompanying piano variations carry so much of the emotional weight and resonance. The recording itself is clear and spacious, though the accompanying texts and translations leave much to be desired, with whole stanzas omitted and frequent differences between what is printed and what is sung. Otherwise, this is a most distinguished recital, and highly recommended. **Tim Ashley**

WHAT NEXT?

Do you have a favourite piece of music and want to explore further? Our monthly feature suggests some musical journeys that venture beyond the most familiar works, with some recommended versions. This month **Paul Kilbey**'s point of departure is ...

Debussy's *La mer* (1905)

Debussy's *La mer* sank like a stone at its 1905 premiere ('I neither hear, nor see, nor feel the sea,' one critic wrote), but it has since gained a central place in the Impressionist repertory. These shimmering *trois esquisses symphoniques* (three symphonic sketches) are a vivid yet vague evocation of the capricious ocean. They are formally innovative, too, unfolding in a flood of overlapping nautical motifs. Many composers have depicted the ocean, but even more have been hypnotised by Debussy's deluge of innovation. If you're diving deep into the work and its legacy, you can't beat the context offered by François-Xavier Roth and Les Siècles' period-instrument live recording made in 2012.

● Les Siècles / François-Xavier Roth (Actes Sud, 9/13)

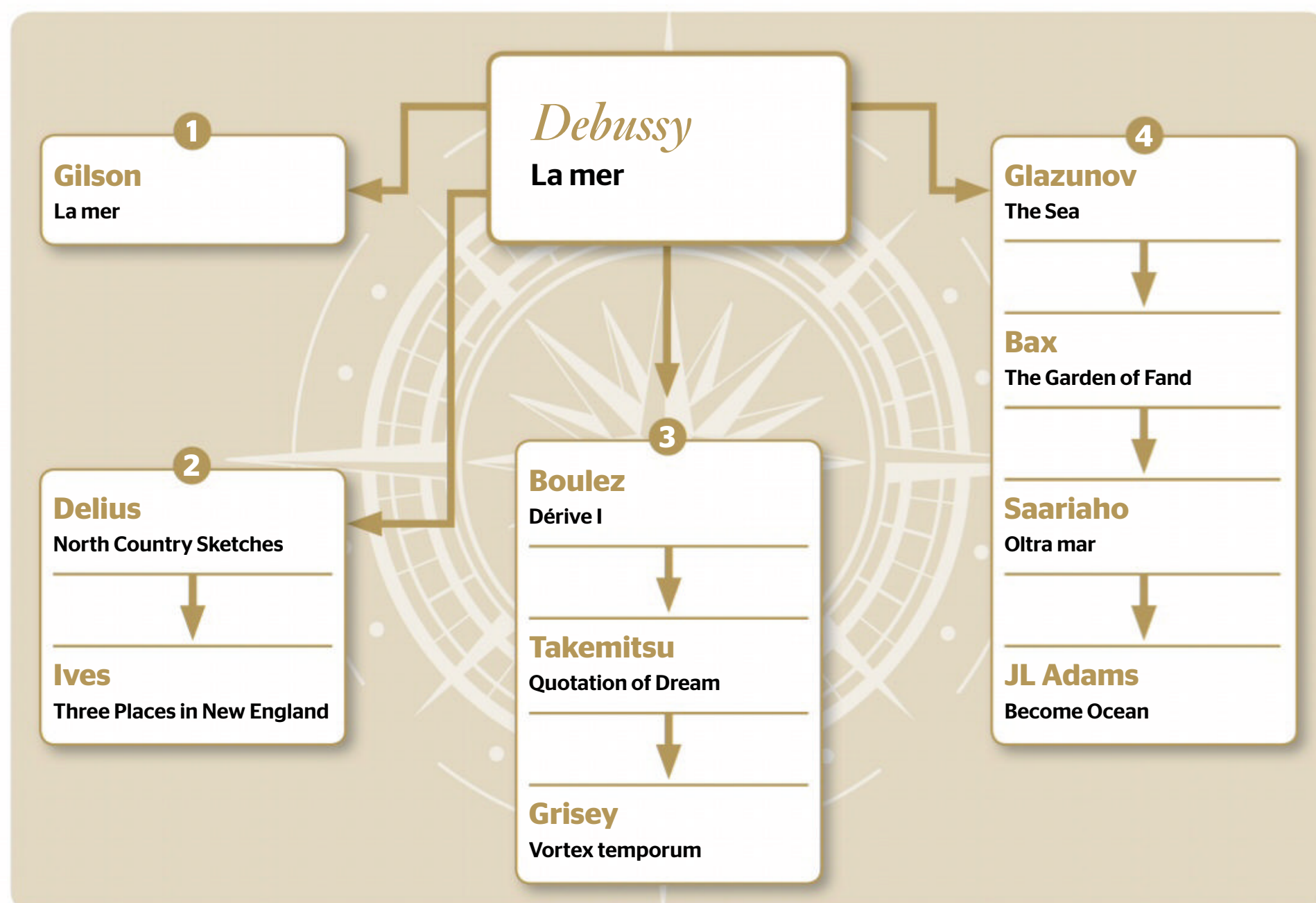
1 *Piracy?*

Gilson *La mer* (1892) You might assume that lesser-known Belgian composer Paul Gilson's *esquisses symphoniques* were a bold Debussy rip-off, but the opposite is more plausible. More than a decade before Debussy even began his, this four-part set was premiered (unlike Debussy's) to great acclaim. Its harmonic language is unsurprisingly conservative by comparison, but its orchestration is very fine.

● Moscow Symphony Orchestra / Frédéric Devreese (Marco Polo)

2 *Early 20th-century shipmates*

Delius *North Country Sketches* (1914) Post-dating Debussy this time, the rolling, mystical strings that open *North Country Sketches*





The Great Wave by Hokusai, whom Debussy admired – this iconic image gracing the cover of *La mer*'s first edition, 1905

are an Impressionistic cousin to *La mer*, albeit evoking the Yorkshire moors of Delius's youth rather than the sea. The English-German composer's four sketches depict the seasons, and though influenced not just by Impressionism but also notably by folk music, they employ an eminently Debussian soft focus.

● WNO Orchestra / Charles Mackerras (Decca, 12/90)

Ives Three Places in New England (c1921) Sketches for Ives's *Three Places in New England* date back as far as 1903, the same year that Debussy began *La mer*, although the majority of the work was done in the 1910s. Stylistically, the avant-garde Ives was no Debussian, but these beguiling and hazy evocations – a ghostly procession of soldiers, a daydreaming boy on Independence Day, a walk by the Housatonic river – surely merit the term 'impressionistic' as much as the Frenchman's music does.

● Boston Symphony Orchestra / Michael Tilson Thomas (DG, 4/71)

3 *La mer's modernist legacy*

Boulez Dérive I (1984) 'Quite honestly,' wrote Philip Clark in these pages in 2013 (Awards issue), 'if audiences can "get" Debussy's *La mer* and *Jeux*, I see no reason to fear the well-sequined harmonies and glitter-and-be-gay timbres of Boulez's "...explosante-fixe..." or *Dérive I*.' The latter, a hypnotic short work for chamber ensemble, is particularly clear proof that Debussy's influence extended well into the 20th century.

● Ensemble Intercontemporain / Pierre Boulez (DG, 5/05)

Takemitsu Quotation of Dream (1991) Subtitled 'Say Sea, Take Me!' (an Emily Dickinson quotation), Takemitsu's composition is a concerto for two pianos and orchestra that combines its own Impressionistic language with direct quotations from Debussy's maritime masterpiece, drifting in and out of focus like a boat glimpsed through the sea mist. It's a beautiful and subtly

disorientating listen, both on its own terms and as a reverent tribute to Debussy.

● Crossley and P Serkin *pfs* London Sinfonietta / Oliver Knussen (DG, 3/99)

Grisey Vortex temporum (1996)

Debussy's ever-evident love of timbre was influential not just for Boulez but also for the 'spectral' composers of the generation in France that followed him. But Gérard Grisey's relatively late work *Vortex temporum* – for a chamber ensemble of piano, strings and wind – is based on a different Impressionistic source: a motif from Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*, which is spun out into an enthralling sonic voyage.

● Ensemble Risognanze / Tito Ceccherini (Stradivarius)

4 *Evocations of the sea*

Glazunov The Sea (1889) Glazunov's seascape is both more tempestuous and more traditional than Debussy's, but just as richly coloured a journey into the deep – even if it is somewhat engulfed by the influence of Wagner, to whose memory it is dedicated.

Lan Shui and the Singapore Symphony Orchestra's fine account pairs it with a marvellously supple take on the Debussy, plus two more sea-inspired works for good measure.

● Singapore Symphony Orchestra / Lan Shui (BIS)

Bax The Garden of Fand (1916) The titular garden of Bax's richly Debussian tone poem is in fact the sea itself: in Irish mythology, Fand is the wife (though Bax states in the preface to his score that she was the daughter) of Manannán, the lord of the ocean, and her garden is the sea. The glistening scoring of *The Garden of Fand* carries us gently away from the world of *La mer* towards a more mythical, mystical realm.

● BBC Philharmonic / Vernon Handley (Chandos, 8/06)

Saariaho Oltra mar (1999) The title of Kaija Saariaho's spectacular seven-part work for large orchestra and choir, which grew out of work on her opera *L'amour de loin* (2000), means 'across the sea' in old French, and its movements variously depict the sea, or travelling across it, or abstract themes such as 'Love', 'Time' and 'Death'. Its broad subtitle, 'Seven Pieces for the New Millennium', hints at the all-encompassing vastness of the ocean.

● Tapiola Chamber Choir, Finnish RSO / Jukka Pekka Saraste (Ondine, 6/05)

JL Adams Become Ocean (2013) This is John Luther Adams's second sea-inspired work (the first being *Dark Waves*, 2007), and it's on a scale even grander than Debussy's. Both ineffably elegant and subtly apocalyptic, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Become Ocean* depicts the vastness and ferocity of the sea with a Debussian lightness of touch. Adams's masterpiece points out the continued centrality of the sea to our lives – it is, after all, inching ever closer to us all.

● Seattle Symphony / Ludovic Morlot (Cantaloupe, 11/14)

Available to stream at Apple Music

Opera



Neil Fisher watches an imaginative production of Verdi's *Le trouvère*:

'The characters are not there to enact the drama; instead they appear to represent it' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**



Richard Wigmore on a varied Vivaldi album from Thomas Dunford and co:

'Lea Desandre, her bright mezzo flecked with deeper tints, shows style and imagination in a vivid clutch of arias' ► **REVIEW ON PAGE 90**

Gluck

Orphée et Eurydice (1774 Paris version)

Dmitry Korchak *ten* Orphée

Andriana Chuchman *sop* Eurydice

Lauren Snouffer *sop* Amour

Orchestra and Chorus of Chicago Lyric Opera /

Harry Bicket

Stage director **John Neumeier**

Video director **Matthew Diamond**

C Major Entertainment (F) DVD 714308;

(F) Blu-ray 714404 (118' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live 2018

Includes synopsis

Gluck

Orphée et Eurydice (1859 version by Berlioz)

Marianne Crebassa *mez* Orphée

Hélène Guilmette *sop* Eurydice

Lea Desandre *mez* Amour

Ensemble Pygmalion / Raphaël Pichon

Stage director **Aurélien Bory**

Video director **François Roussillon**

Naxos (F) DVD 2 110638; (F) Blu-ray NBD0100V

(99' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-MA5.1, DTS5.1 &

PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Opéra-Comique, Paris,

October 16 & 18, 2018

Includes synopsis



Opera directors today seem to have difficulty in coping with Gluck's retelling of the Orpheus legend, where – in both the Vienna version of 1762 and the Paris reworking of 1774 – the lovers are reunited after Eurydice's second death and all ends happily. Recent productions on DVD have shown Orpheus wandering off, miserable and alone. These two new ones arrive at the same destination; but the journeys are very different.

In the performance from Chicago, the direction, choreography and design are all by one man, John Neumeier.

Orphée is a choreographer, Eurydice a star ballerina. During the Overture, while Orphée is rehearsing the company, they quarrel: Eurydice storms out and is killed in a car accident. Consoled by Amour, his assistant, who shows him a painting of the underworld, Orphée imagines that he descends to Hades to rescue his wife. His sanity restored, he returns to rehearsing his ballet but at the end is alone, holding Eurydice's veil.

The Chicago production comprises Gluck's Paris version, complete but for three of the dances at the end, and with a tenor Orphée. Aurélien Bory's production from Paris, while lacking a comparable conceit, is in some ways more radical. Bory uses an optical device called Pepper's Ghost, which teases and confuses the eye by altering the perspective so that characters sometimes appear to be pinned to the stage wall. And Raphaël Pichon has chosen Berlioz's adaptation of 1859 for Pauline Viardot, which is essentially Paris 1774 but with Orphée sung by a woman at the pitch of the original 1762 version for alto castrato. Moreover, Pichon has replaced the cheerful Overture with the penultimate number of Gluck's ballet *Don Juan*. At the end, he cuts the trio 'Tendre Amour' – as Berlioz did – and ends the opera with the second choral lament from Act 1 and the ensuing Ritournelle, heavily accented. The lovers are nowhere to be seen and it's Amour who stares out at us, looking downcast; all the final dances are omitted.

Both productions work well, but questions remain. If Neumeier and Bory each wish to emphasise the seriousness of the story, why include the bravura tenor aria 'L'espoir renaît dans mon âme', which is so out of keeping with the rest of the opera and which might not even be by Gluck? And why does Pichon use Berlioz's version anyway? Neither production takes the opportunity of reassigning 'Cet asile aimable' to a Blessed Spirit, as used to be done. It has often been pointed out that the Eurydice of Act 3 is a passionate woman, demanding her conjugal rights almost on

the spot: the chaste happiness of her air in the Elysian Fields is quite out of character, and I find Pichon's description of it as an expression of 'melancholy and unease' impossible to accept.

In the Chicago production the chorus is invisible, but there are plenty of dancers onstage. Orphée gazes at a photo of Eurydice during 'Objet de mon amour', there are more images on the wall, and he hands out copies to the Furies. He clutches a pillow in his grief and clings to Eurydice's scarf, with which he tries to strangle himself. During the Dance of the Furies he holds a copy of the music: a distancing device, perhaps, but oddly enough you can see that it's a vocal score of the original *Orfeo ed Euridice*. Dmitry Korchak is no *haute-contre* but a robust, heroic tenor. Lauren Snouffer is suitably boyish as Amour: Neumeier says that he is in love with Orphée, but that is not apparent. Andriana Chuchman makes a fiery Eurydice. The choreography executed by the Joffrey Ballet is imaginative, and the chorus and orchestra – performing at present-day pitch – are excellent under the admirable conducting of Harry Bicket.

The Ensemble Pygmalion, on period instruments, play a fraction lower. Here the chorus is onstage. Marianne Crebassa, in a trouser suit and a grey wig that gives her a startling resemblance to Julian Assange, is magnificent. She delivers both 'Laissez-vous toucher par mes pleurs' and 'Quel nouveau ciel' perfectly still, straight to camera. The coloratura of 'L'espoir renaît dans mon âme' goes with a swing, but I wish we were spared the ghastly cadenza from Pauline Viardot's own copy. Cupid in a pink dress is hard to take, but Lea Desandre is good in a portrayal less skittish than usual. Hélène Guilmette, too, is good at expressing Eurydice's lack of understanding. Raphaël Pichon and his chorus and orchestra are exemplary.

Both productions are clever and enjoyable. In the end, though, why don't these unhappy producers stick to what Gluck wrote? With its jubilant chorus and verses for each of the soloists, the ending is



Imaginative choreography: Chicago Lyric Opera present the Paris version of Gluck's *Orphée et Eurydice*

not as perfunctory as some make out. The original myth has Orpheus torn to pieces by Maenads, his severed head floating – still singing – down the river Hebrus. No 18th-century composer would have set that. Instead, Gluck and his librettist end with ‘L’Amour triomphe’. Is that so problematic an affirmation? **Richard Lawrence**

Gomes

Lo schiavo

Svetla Vassileva *sop*..... Ilàra
Massimiliano Pisapia *ten*..... Américo
Andrea Borghini *bar*..... Iberè
Elisa Balbo *sop*..... Countess di Boissy
Daniele Terenzi *bar*..... Gianfèra
Dongho Kim *bass*..... Count Rodrigo/Goitacà
Marco Puggioni *ten*..... Guarûco
Francesco Musinu *bass*..... Tupinambà/Lion
Michelangelo Romero *ten*..... Tapacoà
Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Lirico, Cagliari / John Neschling

Stage director **Davide Garattini Raimondi**

Video director **Tiziano Mancini**

Dynamic © 2 CDS7845; © DVD 37845;

© Blu-ray 57845 (138' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live, February 27 – March 1, 2019

Includes synopsis



Born in Brazil, Antônio Carlos Gomes was a breakthrough composer – the first non-European to score an operatic success in Italy during its golden age. Straddling the period between late Verdi and early Puccini, Gomes studied in Milan and composed four operas which were premiered at La Scala. The most significant of these was *Il Guarany* (1870), which was recorded with Plácido Domingo in the title-role in 1994 (Sony, 5/96). *Lo schiavo* (‘The Slave’) was a later opera, set in Brazil with a plot focused on the slave trade. It was scheduled to premiere in Bologna in 1887 but was cancelled because of an argument between the composer and his librettist, Rodolfo Paravicini. Eventually, *Lo schiavo* had its debut at the Teatro Imperial of Rio de Janeiro in 1889 and would have been politically potent had slavery not been abolished in Brazil the year before. The opera’s impact was also weakened by the decision to move the setting back from 1801 to the 16th

century, so the slaves were no longer black Africans.

Lo schiavo soon slipped into operatic oblivion, although the tenor’s Act 2 aria ‘Quando nascesti tu’ was recorded by the likes of Enrico Caruso, Giacomo Lauri-Volpi and Beniamino Gigli. In February 2019 the opera finally received its Italian premiere, given at the Teatro Lirico di Cagliari, from which the present recording (available both on DVD/Blu-ray and CD) is taken.

The plot offers a classic tenor-soprano-baritone love triangle. Ilàra, a slave girl, is in love with Américo, the landowner’s son. His father disapproves and sets up a marriage between Ilàra and fellow slave Iberè. Throw in a rich countess who fancies Américo, but is a keen abolitionist, and things get complicated. Américo feels betrayed when he finds out about the wedding, the slaves flee and the natives prepare to rise up against Portuguese oppression. Américo is caught and brought to the natives’ camp to challenge Iberè, but the slave declares he has respected Ilàra like a sister and he sacrifices himself to engineer the couple’s escape (a little like the closing moments of *The Pearl Fishers*).

Gomes provides plenty of lyrical material for his singers. One can certainly detect the influence of Verdi, who declared him a 'true musical genius', even if his invention doesn't rise above middle-period Verdi. The Prelude to the second scene of Act 4 is wonderful – a trumpet reveille from the Portuguese fleet mingling with birds at dawn. Some of the arias are very fine, particularly Iberè's 'Sogni d'amore' in Act 4, a gift that should be taken up by baritones everywhere. Indeed, Andrea Borghini is the standout in a mixed cast. His sturdy baritone has a clean Verdian line and he sings his arias magnificently.

Svetla Vassileva is effective as Ilàra, less squally than I've heard her before, and she sings her Act 4 Romanza very nicely, with delicate control over *pianissimos*. Massimiliano Pisapia is not a success as Américo, his tenor sounding lightweight and hollow. He's rather wooden as an actor too. But Elisa Balbo is a sparky, coloratura Countess di Boissy and Dongho Kim makes for a redoubtable Rodrigo, Américo's father.

Davide Garattini Raimondi's production is good by the standard of provincial Italian houses, although his direction of chorus and principals is rather static. Tiziano Santi's sets give us plenty of jungle lianas, juxtaposed with the clipped topiary of the Countess's residence in Act 2. With effective performances, this is a good showcase for *Lo schiavo* and I hope enterprising companies take it up soon.

Mark Pullinger

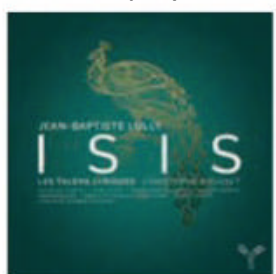
Lully

Isis

Ève-Maud Hubeaux *mez*.....Thalie/Isis/Io
Bénédicte Tauran *sop*.....
.....La Renommée/Melpomène/Mycène/Junon
Ambroisine Bré *mez*.....Calliope/Iris/Syrinx/Hébé
Cyril Auvity *ten*.....Apollon/Pirante/Fury
Edwin Crossley-Mercer *bar*.....Jupiter/Pan
Philippe Estèphe *bar*.....Neptune/Argus
Fabien Hyon *ten*.....Mercure
Aimery Lefèvre *bar*.....Hiérax
Julie Calbète, Julie Vercauteren *sops*.....Nymphs
Namur Chamber Choir; Les Talens Lyriques /
Christophe Rousset

Aparté (M) ② AP216 (156' • DDD)

Includes synopsis, libretto and translation



Atys, the fourth *tragédie en musique* that Lully composed to a libretto by Philippe Quinault, was dubbed 'the king's opera'. There was no chance of *Isis*, its successor, receiving a similar accolade. It was

premiered at the Château de St Germain-en-Laye on January 5, 1677; by the time it was transferred to the Paris Opéra in August it had become the subject of gossip at court. The jealous goddess Juno was taken to be a portrayal of Louis XIV's longstanding mistress, Mme de Montespan, while the character of Io was read as representing the king's current love interest, one of La Montespan's ladies-in-waiting. Quinault was banished from court; by the time he was allowed to return, Lully had collaborated with Thomas Corneille on two more operas.

As with many of Quinault's librettos, the story of *Isis* comes from Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Jupiter has fallen in love with the nymph Io who, already betrothed to Hierax, does her best to resist. Juno, infuriated, descends to earth and slyly informs Jupiter that she wishes to choose Io to adorn her court. Through gritted teeth, Jupiter agrees. (To conceal her from Juno, Ovid had Jupiter transform Io into a white heifer: a missed opportunity here, one feels.) After a failed rescue attempt, during which Hierax is turned into a bird of prey – and that is the last we see of him – Io, subjected to appalling torture, longs for death. When Jupiter agrees to give up his adulterous passion, Juno relents, and Io is raised to the heavens as – yes – the goddess Isis.

The opera begins with the usual Prologue in praise of the unnamed Louis XIV, in this case celebrating France's naval victory over Dutch and Spanish forces at the Battle of Palermo. Much of the subsequent action consists of divertissements to bulk out the story. Act 3 is an opera within the opera where Argus, who is guarding Io, dozes off while being entertained by an enactment of the story of Pan and Syrinx. Io's torture consists of her being exposed to extremes of cold and heat. The shivering, choral and instrumental, of the 'people of the frozen regions' was the inspiration of the music for the Cold Genius and the Chorus of Cold People in Purcell's *King Arthur*.

So spectacle is all, or almost all, and a DVD of a no-expense-spared stage production would be a fine thing. But Christophe Rousset and Les Talens Lyriques, not forgetting the 20-strong Namur Chamber Choir, do a wonderful job in putting across the glories of the opera through sound alone. For an example of how the cast relish the text, listen to the quarrel between Io and Hierax (disc 1, track 21), where Lully moves seamlessly from *secco* recitative to continuo-accompanied arioso and back, then on to 'Je cherche en vain', an arioso

with strings, before more *secco* recitative and a final short duet.

Ève-Maud Hubeaux and Aimery Lefèvre are superb here, and Hubeaux articulates her despair in impassioned phrases when suffering later on. Curiously, her character is given nothing to sing when transformed from Io to Isis. There is much doubling-up for the rest of the cast. Edwin Crossley-Mercer, very much an alpha-male Jupiter, is touching in Pan's 'Hélas! quel bruit! Qu'entends-je?', when the fleeing Syrinx is turned into reeds. The shepherds accompanying his achingly beautiful lament are heard earlier in a duet in praise of love, flowing in euphonious thirds and sixths and charmingly sung by the *hautes-contre* Cyril Auvity and Fabien Hyon. Bénédicte Tauran makes a formidable Juno.

Much is demanded of the chorus, from the triumphant Prologue to the scenes of cold and heat. The Namur Chamber Choir is full-bodied but the singers are marvellously light on their feet. The orchestra respond with brilliance and precision to Christophe Rousset's direction. A word, too, in praise of an ear-tickling continuo group that includes lute and organ as well as string bass and harpsichord. This is a highly enjoyable addition to an excellent series of operas by a composer who, thanks to French groups such as Les Arts Florissants and Les Talens Lyriques, is at last coming into his own.

Richard Lawrence

Rossini

Ricciardo e Zoraide

Juan Diego Flórez *ten*.....Ricciardo
Pretty Yende *sop*.....Zoraide
Sergey Romanovsky *ten*.....Agorante
Nicola Ulivieri *bass-bar*.....Ircano
Victoria Yarovaya *mez*.....Zomira
Xabier Anduaga *ten*.....Ernesto
Sofia Mchedlishvili *sop*.....Fatima
Martiniana Antonie *mez*.....Elmira
Ruzil Gatin *ten*.....Zamorre
Chorus of the Teatro Ventidio Basso; RAI National
Symphony Orchestra / Giacomo Sagripanti

Stage director **Marshall Pynkosky**

Video director **Ariella Beddini**

C Major Entertainment (F) ② DVD 752608;

(F) 752704 (176' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i •

DTS-HD MA5.1, DTS5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Adriatic Arena, Pesaro, 2018

Includes synopsis



The undoubted draw of the Pesaro Rossini Opera Festival's 2018 bicentenary revival of *Ricciardo e Zoraide*, the

three-hour mock-heroic epic Rossini set midway through his residency at Naples' Teatro San Carlo, was the presence of Juan Diego Flórez in the role of the lovelorn Paladin knight Ricciardo. Flórez fans are, however, in for a long wait. In this structurally uneven *dramma*, the best part of an hour passes before the Paladin utters a single note.

Not all Rossini's Neapolitan *opere serie* have failed the test of time when it comes to theatre (as opposed to concert-hall) revival. *Ermione* enjoyed success in Pesaro in 1987 and later at Glyndebourne; Pesaro also had success with director Jean-Louis Martinoty's memorable 2005 staging of the seemingly unstageable *Bianca e Falliero* (still available on a Dynamic DVD). Unfortunately, Marshall Pynkosky's staging of *Ricciardo e Zoraide* is a complete turkey, one of those old-fashioned, amateurish productions in which the players are not so much directed as randomly moved or grouped in tableaux. If the images provided by the none too good video transmission are anything to go by, few of the *comprimario* players or chorus have much interest in what's going on. The appearance throughout the evening of a well-drilled but entirely extraneous dance troupe further confuses the scene.

The singing is mostly first-rate, led by Flórez in spectacular form, and Sergey Romanovsky as the sexually reckless Nubian king Agorante. There is also a more than competent Zoraide from the soprano Pretty Yende. Unfortunately, sound and image are poorly married in a recording where singers often sound closer than they look.

If this was a CD set, I should probably be writing very differently. As it is, it's something for Flórez fans alone. If it's the opera you are interested in, Opera Rara's 1995 studio recording (4/97) is the thing to have. **Richard Osborne**

Stefani

The Supposed Miracle, or Cracovians and Highlanders

Václav Čížek *ten*..... Bartłomiej/Jonek/Świstos

Lenka Cafourková *sop*..... Dorota

Natalia Rubiś *sop*..... Basia

Krystian Adam *ten*..... Stach/Morgal

Jan Martiník *bass*..... Bryndas

Thomas Král *bar*..... Bardos

Collegium Vocale 1704; Collegium 1704 /

Václav Luks

Fryderyk Chopin Institute © ② NIFCCD080/81

(151' • DDD)

Includes libretto and translation



The Supposed Miracle, or Cracovians and Highlanders (Cud mniemany, czyli

Krakowiacy i Górale) was first performed in Warsaw in 1794. Its librettist was the playwright and actor-director Wojciech Bogusławski (1757-1829), one of the founding fathers of Polish theatre, though its composer, Jan Stefani (1746-1829), a violinist in the court orchestra of King Stanisław August Poniatowski, hailed originally from Prague. At its premiere, weeks ahead of the Kościuszko Uprising against the Second Partition of Poland, the work's demand for the creation of a national identity through adherence to traditional culture was deemed inflammatory; but by the time it was banned, after only three performances, its impact had been significant. Kościuszko's supporters whistled Stefani's melodies in the streets. Bogusławski was forced into exile, though Stefani remained in Warsaw, where he eventually became Kapellmeister at St John's Cathedral. In Poland, the work is still regarded as one of the country's great national statements, though little has been heard of it elsewhere.

It's set in a village near Kraków, and deals with the lovers Stach and Basia, who are prevented from marrying by Basia's promiscuous young stepmother Dorota, who has her eyes on Stach herself and is consequently determined to push ahead with Basia's arranged marriage to the Highlander Bryndas. Into this emotional contretemps wanders Stach's friend Bardos, a physics student from Kraków University, to whom the lovers turn for help. His solution to their problems involves electricity, which the villagers and Highlanders regard as miraculous (whence the title), but crucial to the work's development is Bardos's growing affection for the villagers themselves, which finally prompts him to abandon physics and remain among them.

The work is a Singspiel, in the literal sense of a play with songs rather than an opera per se, and its principal drawback is that the numbers are brief and the dialogue too extensive. But the music, when we get to it, is captivating. Mozart's influence is readily apparent, though much of the melodic material derives from Polish folk music, which Stefani, pre-empting so many later composers, collected on forays away from the capital. Many of the solo numbers are strophic songs, though uppity Dorota is given a grand *da capo* polonaise, while Bryndas, who really fancies himself, extols his charms ('I'm a hunky, handsome jock', the translation reads) in a flashy krakowiak. Bardos, the reconciler, sings hymnic ballads, and there's a wonderful ritual wedding chorus, which contrasts the groomsman's impatience with the bridesmaids' sorrow at the bride's impending loss of both freedom and virginity.

Exhilaratingly conducted by Václav Luks, this new recording uses a Czech choir and orchestra, Czech and Polish soloists, and a group of Polish actors for the dialogue. Speaking and singing voices don't always quite meld: Natalia Rubiś's

E. GUTZWILLER & C^{IE}

PRIVATE BANKERS SINCE 1886

BASEL - GENEVA - ZURICH

WWW.GUTZWILLER.CH +41 61 205 21 00

PROUD PARTNER OF

laCetra

Barockorchester & Vokalensemble Basel

Andrea Marcon, Artistic Director



spirited, Susanna-ish Basia, for instance, doesn't really square with Anna Cieślak's earthy delivery of the text. But the acting is consistently polished, and there's some lovely singing. Krystian Adam makes a handsome-sounding Stach, his dreaminess nicely contrasted with Václav Čížek's forthrightness as his pragmatic friend Jonek. Lenka Cafourková has fun with Dorota's polonaise, while Jan Martiník swaggers sexily as Bryndas. Playing and choral singing are exemplary and spirited. You may or many not like the barrage of sound effects – a mill race, birdsong, bleating sheep, and so on – that accompanies the dialogue, though the recording itself is admirably spacious and perfectly balanced. **Tim Ashley**

Verdi

Le trouvère

Roberta Mantegna *sop* Léonore
Giuseppe Gipali *ten* Manrique
Franco Vassallo *bar* Comte de Luna
Nino Surguladze *mez* Azucena
Marco Spotti *bass* Fernand
Tonia Langella *mez* Inès
Luca Casalin *ten* Ruiz/Messenger
Nicolò Donini *bass* Old Bohemian

Chorus and Orchestra of the Teatro Comunale,

Bologna / Roberto Abbado

Stage director **Robert Wilson**

Video director **Tiziano Mancini**

Dynamic (F) ② DVD 37835; (F) Blu-ray 57835

(174' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-HD MA5.1,

DD5.1 & PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Teatro Farnese, Parma,

October 7 & 14, 2018

Includes synopsis



This is Verdi's *Il trovatore* and it is not Verdi's *Il trovatore*. That's not just because this is the

1857 French-language version of the opera – presented by the Parma Verdi Festival in a new critical edition – but also because it's a Robert Wilson production. And a Robert Wilson staging doesn't so much present a piece as float above it. The characters are not there to enact the drama; instead they appear to represent it. The whole harmonious vision is more important than narrative flow. This collision of an unfamiliar version of a classic opera, in a language you don't expect to hear it, alongside Wilson's abstraction reinforces the overall dislocation. The result is strangely compelling.

The score of *Le trouvère* is by no means wildly different from the urtext but,

knowing the Parisian public, Verdi leavened the textures and added lighter, brighter effects: if the original score is an earthy barolo, this one is more like a silky burgundy. There are a few embellishments, some cuts and an altered ending in which the death of Manrico – here Manrique – is less abrupt: to my mind, it's a superior alteration.

The most significant addition is the elaborate ballet in Act 3, where suddenly Comte de Luna's troops are supposed to be entertained by some apparently carefree and fleet-footed gypsies. Wilson, predictably, has no truck with this scenario. While Roberto Abbado and the Orchestra of the Teatro Comunale di Bologna polish up the not disagreeable ballet music to a shine – bouncy music that includes a thrifty rejig of the Anvil Chorus – an ensemble of boxers come on with big red gloves, watched by a mysterious old man. These pugilists run, they play-fight, they even do some graceful waltzing. The surreal movement is a strange, curved mirror to the eerie charm of the music: yes, it's deeply odd, but in keeping with a morbidly chaotic opera. Framed by Wilson's typically austere sets and lighting, the sequence encompasses beauty, violence and comic-book humour. If it wasn't for the tightness of the direction (admirably filmed for DVD and Blu-ray) and the playing, it would fall apart completely.

Elsewhere, this *Trouvère* unfurls with dreamlike elegance. The singers form hieratic poses, with outlandish costumes (think helmets with horns) and elaborate, frozen make-up. It's a strong cast, although it's a shame none are native French speakers. Only Nino Surguladze's Azucena seems to bridle at Wilson's minimalist restrictions, and so she undermines the impact of her velvety mezzo. Spared the usual repertoire of aimless hand semaphore, however, both Giuseppe Gipali's impressive Manrique and Roberta Mantegna's silvery-voiced Léonore find more vocal freedom. Franco Vassallo's de Luna is a bumpier ride, forcing his tone too often. Marco Spotti is an assured Fernand, and the Bolognese chorus are strong. **Neil Fisher**

Vivaldi

Farnace – Gelido in ogni vena. **Giustino** – Vedrò con mio diletto. **Griselda** – Agitata da due venti. **L'Olimpiade** – Mentre dormi, amor fomenti. Bassoon Concerto, RV495. Cello Concerto, RV416. Juditha triumphans, RV644 – Armate face et anguibus; Veni, veni me sequere fida. Lute Concerto, RV93. Nisi Dominus, RV608 – Cum dederit

Lea Desandre *mez* **Bruno Philippe** *vc*

Peter Whelan *bn* **Jupiter / Thomas Dunford** *lute*

Alpha (F) ALPHA550 (78' • DDD • T/t)



For its mix of irrelevance and pretentiousness ('music is the

homeland of infinite possibility, freedom and sublimated time'), Alpha's perfunctory booklet note takes some beating. The performances from the Baroque A-listers of Jupiter, every one a soloist, deserve better. The overwhelming impression left by this mixed Vivaldi programme is of chamber music delightedly shared among friends. In the three concertos, including the ever-popular one for lute, the players create a spirit of Carnavalesque improvisation. Phrasing and colours are never predictable. Peter Whelan's dazzlingly agile bassoon is at once clown, acrobat and – in the central *Largo* – melancholy poet. With his richly coloured tone, cellist Bruno Philippe brings a raw, visceral energy to the cello concerto's *Allegros*, egged on by strumming, pounding continuo; and he and lutenist/director Thomas Dunford evoke images of the misty Venetian lagoon in their dreamily floated slow movements.

Lea Desandre, her bright high mezzo flecked with deeper tints, shows comparable style and imagination in a vivid clutch of arias. In 'Gelido in ogni vena', from *Farnace*, she and her lacerating string accomplices suggest a soul traumatised (Farnace is 'frozen' with horror at his responsibility for his son's imagined death, though you won't deduce that from the booklet). For all her eloquence, Desandre misses a sense of underlying urgency in an aria from *Giustino*, sung by Emperor Anastasius as he prepares for battle. Conversely, some may find her coloratura, while undeniably exciting, too manically driven in Vagaus's invocation to the Furies from *Juditha triumphans*. But Desandre is at her most beguiling in *Juditha*'s 'Veni, veni', partnered by chalumeau-as-turtle-dove, and a tenderly phrased sleep aria from *L'Olimpiade*. A 'shipwreck' solo from *Griselda*, desperate in the right sense, provides a thrilling Vivaldian finish from singer and players. A pity we have to take the aria's context, here and elsewhere, on trust.

Richard Wigmore



Strangely compelling: Robert Wilson's production of Verdi's *La traviata* has a dreamlike elegance, with outlandish costumes and elaborate make-up

Wagner

Der fliegende Holländer (1841 version)

Samuel Youn *bass*..... Holländer

Ingela Brimberg *sop*..... Senta

Lars Woldt *bass*..... Donald

Bernard Richter *ten*..... Georg

Ann-Beth Solvang *mez*..... Mary

Manuel Günther *ten*..... Steersman

Arnold Schoenberg Choir; Les Musiciens du

Louvre / Marc Minkowski

Stage director **Olivier Py**

Video director **François Roussillon**

Naxos © **DVD** 2 110637; © **Blu-ray** NBD0099V

(136' • NTSC • 16:9 • 1080i • DTS-MA5.1, DTS5.1 &

PCM stereo • 0 • s)

Recorded live at the Theater an der Wien, Vienna,

November 22 & 24, 2015

Includes synopsis



If your production concept for Wagner's 'Romantic horror' takes you down the reasonable route that this is a show in itself about the Dutchman, it's also reasonable that you might actually see

its director onstage to be Satan himself. (He certainly gets many a name-check in the opera's libretto.) So far so possible, including the 'extra' actor's first appearance during the Overture at a dressing-room mirror to put on his make-up. But you might then hope that this added Satan (topless, with a skull's death-mask face) would do more than reappear from the wings to match literal verbal cues and move around like an effete dancer, gesturing the title-role to be more, well, Satanic ...

That's the main disappointment of the production. Both Py and Minkowski have form in Wagner, the latter on disc (*Naïve*, 4/14) in this very early version of the score with the same Senta and orchestra. But Py does not have a lot else to say about the piece apart from moving the costumes to the time of the score's composition and endlessly – and I do mean endlessly – revolving his central set component, a wall with gallery and walkways that serves quite effectively as ships in Acts 1 and 3 and Daland's house in Act 2. (Incidentally, if we're really doing the 'first version' – and we do hear its score and the original Scottish names for Daland and Erik –

there should be intervals: not Wagner himself, nor Cosima, nor Wieland ever performed the opera as one continuous piece.)

Back to the motley. The cast is good and Brimberg especially is an exceptional Senta, able in both the heroics and the glooms of this tricky in-between role. Youn is very formal and not at all moving; Erik/Georg is (deliberately) rather wet. But, in the pit and perhaps most sadly of all, Minkowski brings little of the fire of his CD recording and sounds, with his Romantic pauses and swoonings, as if he would rather be conducting the later ('normal') version of the score. The filming has not got any kind of handle on the production's lighting – which may be very subtle but it's actually quite hard to see much detail, especially (and importantly) the principals' faces.

There have been many imaginative *Holländer* realisations onstage but not too many have made it to official DVD. I'd stick with the older Kupfer from Bayreuth (DG, 11/91, 8/05) or the recent Homoki one from Zurich (DG, 4/15) and, sadly, give this new one a miss. **Mike Ashman**

GRAMOPHONE

PRESENTS

BEETHOVEN

250 years of iconic music explored

The greatest works • The most inspiring artists • The essential recordings

GRAMOPHONE PRESENTS... BEETHOVEN

gramophone.co.uk



BEETHOVEN COLLECTORS' EDITION OF GRAMOPHONE 97 YEARS IN THE MAKING

- 100 PAGES OF EXPERT AND AUTHORITATIVE ARTICLES TO EXPLORE -
- INTERVIEWS WITH TODAY'S LEADING INTERPRETERS -
- OUR LIST OF ESSENTIAL BEETHOVEN RECORDINGS -

Order your copy for just £9.99 today

Go to www.magsubscriptions.com/beethoven Call: **0800 137201**

The Editors of Gramophone's sister music magazines, Jazzwise and Songlines, recommend some of their favourite recordings from the past month

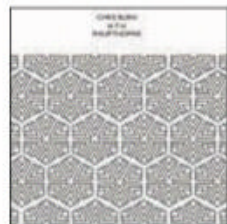
Jazz

Brought to you by **jazzwise**

Chris Burn: as if as

Philip Thomas

Confront Core Series © core 09



Transcribing Derek Bailey guitar improvisations for solo pianist might seem like a pointless exercise, one that rubs against the grain of everything Bailey preached about the liquidity of improvised music; sounds that exist in, and for, the moment only. But as pianist Philip Thomas points out, Chris Burn's transcriptions of material from Bailey's 1991 *Solo Guitar Volume 2* give an objectified analysis of the guitarist's practice and aesthetic. Burn developed these piano transcriptions out of an earlier version he made for the improv trio Cranc, and the 'stringiness' of that group's violin, cello, harp line-up has bled through into his piano rethink; Thomas, you fancy, is plucking the

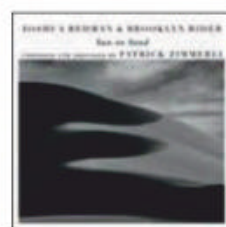
keyboard rather than attacking it with his fingers. The most radical departure from Bailey is due to the piano's fixed tuning and temperament: some of those perfect fifths and open thirds, sheathed in overtones and resonant sustain on the guitar, sound dangerously naked on the cleaner-cut piano. As a consequence, light shines on the architectural clarity underlining Bailey's improvisations, and you're sent back to the original record to discover them anew.

Philip Clark

Sun On Sand

Joshua Redman & Brooklyn Rider

Nonesuch © 554796



Saxophonist Redman and composer-arranger Patrick Zimmerli collaborate again following 2014's *Walking Shadows*, and this

new work foregrounds the latter since the repertoire is an eight-piece suite of his, originally premiered at Wigmore Hall. At its creative peak the album overturns any easy clichés of 'chamber music' that might be mooted given the presence of a string quartet as well as acoustic rhythm section and soloist. Tellingly, it is a piano-less group and there is a clarity in the ensemble sound that serves the performance well, particularly on the more impassioned, uptempo pieces. There is also a pleasing emphasis on the low register, which has a sombre, misterioso feel that contrasts with the flurries of energy elsewhere that suggest Irish jigs for a rock and pop audience. Redman plays with the flourish one would expect and, above all, his rhythmic input is impressive. But the endeavour has good moments rather than the great moments that make the most of the abundance of talent gathered in the room. **Kevin Le Gendre**

World Music

Brought to you by **SONGLINES**

Úrnua

Carl Hession, Eimear Coughlan, Francis Cunningham

Úrnua ©



The scion of a well-known County Galway family of traditional musicians, pianist Carl Hession has established himself as a consummate accompanist, arranger and composer. To the fore on *Úrnua* (Irish for 'Fresh and New') are his eloquent abilities as a composer, with 40 new tunes arranged into 18 sets that find Hession on piano supporting two young County Clare talents making their debuts on disc. Having learned the fiddle from her grandfather, Paddy Canny, and harp from Janet Harbison, Eimear Coughlan shows herself wonderfully communicative in pieces cast in the guise of assorted dance forms. A pupil of West

Limerick concertina virtuoso Tim Collins, Francis Cunningham's contributions are never less than lively and colourful, not least in the reel sets that open and close the album. Hession's piano is always discreet, the overall impression one of relaxed, reciprocal music making. The result is altogether pleasing and pleasant.

Michael Quinn

The Livelong Day

Lankum

Rough Trade Records ©



The outstanding ten minutes of 'The Wild Rover' dominates this third album from Ireland's most significant band. Drawing on the older, regretful, desperate 17th-century source for the popular ballad, it features Radie Peat's singular voice in

grainy close-up, drawing a heavy line across a music that floods and streams around her. The instrumental 'Ode to Lullaby' has a pulsing, semi-acoustic 1970s Kosmische feel, while 'Bear Creek' leavens a seesawing drone with a more conventional fiddle tune, ascending and descending like one of Escher's impossible staircases. 'Katie Cruel' features another strong Radie Peat vocal, this song of a sex worker as pertinent in the age of modern slavery as ever it was. The eccentric brilliance of 'The Pride of Petravore' steers *The Livelong Day* towards a powerful close with 'Hunting the Wren', drawing on the story of the Wrens of the Curragh, a community of female outcasts 'beyond the pale' of Catholic Ireland, sung by Peat and fuelled by the quartet's uilleann pipes, concertinas, strings, Hammond, harmonium and more, enveloping each other to create abstract soundscapes of startling depth. **Tim Cumming**

Gramophone, Jazzwise and Songlines are published by MA Music, Leisure & Travel, home to the world's best specialist music magazines. To find out more, visit gramophone.co.uk, jazzwisemagazine.com and songlines.co.uk

REISSUES & ARCHIVE

Our monthly guide to the most exciting catalogue releases, historic issues and box-sets

ZUBIN MEHTA • 94
BOX-SET ROUND-UP • 100

RAYMOND LEWANTHAL • 96
REPLAY • 102

LP ROUND-UP • 98
CLASSICS RECONSIDERED • 104

More than a master of ceremonies

Half a century of conductor Zubin Mehta on record, assessed by **Peter Quantrill**

While guiding him through three years of study at the Vienna Music Academy, Hans Swarowsky predicted an illustrious future for Zubin Mehta: he would be ‘a great figure in the history of music’. Swarowsky may have had more far-reaching ambitions in mind for Mehta than becoming yet another decent Brahms conductor. In October 1954, the 18-year-old Mehta had travelled to Vienna from his home city of Bombay with scarcely more experience under his belt than a few concerts with the semi-amateur band scratched together by his violinist father. A vast English-speaking population was apparently waiting to discover the riches of the European classical tradition – and still waits, though not for Mehta’s want of trying.

Following a tricky year as assistant to John Pritchard in Liverpool, Mehta secured his first post of significance as music director with the Montreal Symphony Orchestra (Orchestre Symphonique de Montréal, or OSM). With them he made his first recordings for RCA Victor (an LP side of contemporary Canadian works, and a live recording from 1963 of *La valse* and Mahler’s First Symphony from the inaugural concert at the OSM’s new Salle Wilfrid-Pelletier), and it’s a shame that they haven’t found their way into this otherwise comprehensive box of ‘The Complete Columbia Album Collection’.

‘This is your Bible,’ Swarowsky would tell his class, score in hand, ‘or your Koran or whatever it is they have where you come from’ – this addressed to Mehta (whose family is Parsee, following the teachings of Zoroaster). ‘You will adhere to this absolutely.’ Yet Swarowsky was ideologically bound neither to the Berlin-based Neue Sachlichkeit (New Objectivity) school of interpretation exemplified by Otto Klemperer, nor to Arturo Toscanini’s

doctrine of *com’è scritto*. To judge from his own writings, intensive study of the score under Swarowsky’s tuition would foster a physically relaxed technique and a complete grasp of harmony, voice-leading and in particular tempo relationships that should guide any orchestra through the piece at hand, whatever their technical standard. His best pupils (many of them listed in the Icons article on page 62) shared those virtues, most especially Mehta and Claudio Abbado, who were then fellow members of the Musikverein chorus.

The early 1980s was a time of milk and honey for both conductors and orchestras

Given Swarowsky’s friendship with Richard Strauss and empathy for his music, it seems fitting that disc 1 of the new set concludes with a richly refined account of *Don Juan* (Swarowsky once made Mehta conduct the piece through while holding his sleeves, so that he could move only his wrists). It was recorded in 1965, three years after Mehta had moved from Montreal, taken charge of the Los Angeles PO and coached it into an estimable orchestra for Strauss, as several Decca albums would subsequently confirm. The venue chosen was Royce Hall at UCLA, but in the event, this RCA recording was the first and last to use the orchestra’s new Dorothy Chandler Pavilion – at once over-bright and over-resonant.

On the move again 13 years later, Mehta was faced once more with the challenge of making records in a much-heralded but acoustically suboptimal purpose-built venue, Avery Fisher Hall in New York. By now signed to Columbia and installed as Isaac Stern’s man at the helm of the New York PO, he led no fewer than 18

recordings between *The Rite of Spring* in September 1977 and Mahler’s First – his third recording of the symphony at the ripe old age of 44 – in November 1980.

Mehta wished to re-establish what he called the ‘meat and potatoes’ central symphonic tradition at the heart of the NYPO repertoire after the tenure of Pierre Boulez. His aims chimed with the plans of the Columbia label. This was a time of milk and honey for conductors and orchestras, mirroring the glut of re-recordings at the dawn of the LP–stereo era. With the new digital technology up and running (‘all else is gaslight’, as Karajan remarked to Sony’s chairman Norio Ohga), labels required up-to-date recordings of the central repertoire to sell to what was then still a healthy market of consumers with their brand-new CD players.

The results often spoke less of haste than of efficiency. Still in analogue, *The Rite of Spring* was recorded at Manhattan Center, where the engineers compensated for the cavernous size of the studio by spotlighting in odd and unpredictable ways. Back at Avery Fisher Hall, *Petrushka* suffers instead from too narrow a sound stage, boxing up Stravinsky’s orchestration as if within a puppet theatre, at least compared with the detail of Mehta’s LAPO readings at Royce Hall. Considered purely as interpretations, however, the New York recordings are more sharply drawn and rhythmically taut. Here, and throughout the Columbia box, a fuller understanding of Mehta’s work is possible only with reference to a similarly comprehensive collection of his Decca/DG discography; perhaps one is in the pipeline.

The advent of digital technology, bestowed for the first time by Columbia on Mehta’s NYPO *Also sprach Zarathustra*, brought problems of its own. Damped dynamic levels and a curious surface sheen to the recorded sound give the impression



The 'undemonstrative and easy-going' Zubin Mehta has fully embraced the Viennese tradition

of engineers anxious not to damage their new kit. Upon reaching the Marcia funebre of the *Eroica*, wrote Richard Osborne (9/80), 'I sense a lack of inwardness in Mehta's reading.' And there it is: we have reached a leitmotif in listening to and writing about Mehta. The conductor himself reportedly asked the RCA engineers in Los Angeles for 'a warm, expansive tone, without the explosive attack one hears from some of the famous orchestras'. Whether it's Liszt's *Hamlet* in Berlin, *Gurrelieder* in New York or Mahler's Third in Tel Aviv, that search for warmth has often led to smoothly rounded edges, and to musical landscapes not drained of colour but cut down to size and varnished to subdue contour and contrast.

Often, but by no means always: everyone concerned is on their mettle in a live NYPO Beethoven Ninth from 1983 which refreshes one's faith in that almost-forgotten style of performance where portions of the first movement don't sound as though they're colliding with a brick wall, and the slow movement isn't a hastily muttered prayer in a side chapel. With a team of soloists on top form (Margaret Price, Marilyn Horne, Jon Vickers and Matti Salminen, channelling Pizarro rather than Sarastro – when he tells you to rejoice, you rejoice) the performance must be counted a sleeper, in both Mehta's discography and that of the Ninth as a whole. Not so a studio Eighth which falls victim to a straitjacketed tempo scheme, and a Fifth that is, to quote Bernstein on his own NYPO Beethoven Fifth, 'too sung and Brahmsian'.

Mehta has often said that the music of Brahms and Strauss made him want to be a conductor: when the NYPO and Israel PO Brahms sets were separately reissued, I compared them to 'watching choppy seas from the upper deck of a cruise liner'

(5/16), but the early-digital piano concertos with Daniel Barenboim pay enduring testament to a friendship full of in-jokes no less than music. They make for absorbing comparison here with Rudolf Buchbinder (Vienna, 2015) and Artur Schnabel in the First (Tel Aviv, 1976). What can be frustratingly blank about Mehta's symphonic work becomes a positive virtue in his work as an accompanist. Partnerships with Pinchas Zukerman (Bartók, Beethoven, Brahms and Bruch) often go through the motions, whereas he strikes sparks off the 17-year-old Midori (Dvořák, more Bartók and Bruch), the 16-year-old Julian Rachlin (a heat-seeking missile of a Wieniawski Second – one of many often-overlooked and long-unavailable recordings restored to circulation by the box) and Vladimir Feltsman, recorded in his prime in 1988 live in Tel Aviv with Rachmaninov's Third Piano Concerto, though the bone-dry sound does no one any favours.

And Mehta has moved on in his undemonstrative, easy-going way, not only in moulding *tuttis* to the character of his soloists, but with the temper of the times. The Bach Double Concerto with Stern and Gil Shaham from 1996 is a great deal lighter and more pointed than the performance at Stern's 60th-anniversary concert 16 years earlier. Accompanying Khatia Buniatishvili's Beethoven First Piano Concerto in 2015, Mehta and the Israel PO have transformed themselves from the sleepy backing ensemble for Jean-Pierre Rampal (Mozart flute concertos, 1988) into a Classical orchestra with sharpened claws.

Singers, too, bring out the best in Mehta, and he in them. A pair of shrewdly balanced but inert discs of bleeding chunks from New York give little notice of his qualities as a Wagnerian compared with

a 1981 Immolation Scene with Caballé in her prime, and a slow-burn first act of *Die Walküre* from 1985, though the microphones keep a too-respectful distance from Éva Marton and Peter Hofmann. Jane Eaglen's recital of Mozart and Strauss was criticised for 'matter-of-fact' accompaniment (6/98) – another critical trope of Mehta-ography – but I find the dramatically insensitive ordering more of an issue, and the disc opens with a glistening, gripping final scene from *Salome*. A sumptuously played, viscerally involving account of the complete opera (with Marton again in the title-role) marks the climax to a fine series of Strauss albums from Berlin. Muddy recorded sound is again the inhibiting factor to the success of a well-cast *Le nozze di Figaro* from Florence, apparently recorded under studio conditions in a single day in November 1992: some 'folle journée'! But then the conductor's operatic gifts had been spotted early on by the Met's Rudolf Bing and harnessed by RCA in sets of *Il trovatore* and *Tosca* that retain classic status even if the remastering on the new set has hardly minimised tape hiss.

On audio and film, the latter-day image of Mehta as a benign, businesslike master of ceremonies is reinforced by four New Year's Day concerts and an outdoor summer gala from Vienna. Leonard Bernstein and Herbert von Karajan between them fixed in public consciousness the idea of the conductor as either a demonic or mystical figure, and Mehta satisfies neither ideal, though close listening reveals their influence throughout the box. In fact, it was listening to Karl Böhm conducting Brahms's First at the Musikverein that brought Mehta's dreams to life as a student: 'It suddenly came to me what I was trying to do.' He remains at heart a Viennese musician. **G**

THE RECORDING

'Zubin Mehta - The Complete Columbia Album Collection'

Sony Classical (94 discs) + (3) DVD
19075 93766-2



A great American virtuoso pianist

Jeremy Nicholas lauds a keyboard titan of the old school, Raymond Lewenthal

Raymond Lewenthal (1923-88): a name unknown to most people under 40 but one that needs no introduction to pianophiles of a certain vintage. He swept on to the scene in the late 1960s – literally: he liked to appear on stage dressed in black cape, top hat, gloves and cane like one of the brooding Romantic artists of the previous century he sought to emulate, albeit a camp caricature of one. A barnstorming virtuoso, he introduced a whole generation to the music of Alkan and a host of other forgotten composers.

Lewenthal only began formal piano lessons at the late age of 15, having taught himself to read and write music. He had some lessons with Shura Cherkassky's mother before studying at Juilliard from 1946 on a full scholarship with Olga Samaroff, Leopold Stokowski's first wife who, interestingly, had been a pupil of Alkan's illegitimate son Élie-Miriam Delaborde. Even by that time, Lewenthal had to be reined in for his unpleasant behaviour towards fellow students, a foretaste of his acerbic and mean-spirited mien in later years.

In 1948 he made his debut in Prokofiev's Third Piano Concerto under Dimitri Mitropoulos, but his burgeoning career nearly came to an end in August 1953 when he was severely beaten up by a gang of thugs in Central Park, New York. He was left with seven broken bones in his fingers and arms. A long period of rehabilitation followed but by 1955 he was able to record an album of bravura toccatas for Westminster. In 1958 he studied in Europe with both Guido Agosti and the elderly Cortot. While in Paris, he immersed himself in the music of Alkan, and in 1963, to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the composer's birth, he gave an all-Alkan recital on New York's non-commercial radio station WBAI which attracted much attention. A New York Town Hall recital the following year (his first in the city since 1951) featured some of Alkan's music and led to an invitation from RCA in 1965 to record the groundbreaking Alkan album reproduced here on disc 1.

Five years later, soured relationships with managers and agents led to fewer engagements. Teaching became Lewenthal's priority, and in 1973 he joined the faculty at the Manhattan School of Music. In the early 1980s his health declined owing to a chronic heart condition, and he retired, living in virtual seclusion in

Hudson, New York, until a heart attack felled him on November 21, 1988.

As our own Jed Distler remarks in his booklet for this collection, though 'it may not embrace the full scope of the pianist's repertoire ... it unquestionably substantiates his position as a major crusader for unjustly neglected Romantic rarities'. I had to start with the Henselt Concerto. It was the first Lewenthal disc I ever bought and my introduction to the world of the once-popular Romantic piano concerto. The Henselt is one of the best, and Lewenthal's indelible performance is a fire-breather, more impetuous even than that of Michael Ponti (who had recorded it for Vox just four months earlier in September 1968), though with less accurate ensemble than the refined Marc-André Hamelin (Hyperion, 8/94). The one problem with the recording – which was present on the LP – is the sound: 'coarse and congested', with 'clangy' piano tone, said *Gramophone's* Lionel Salter in January 1970. It's worth persevering with, though, for such an uninhibited and exuberant response to the score.

Perhaps his recording of Liszt's 'Après une lecture du Dante' is not the tidiest or neatest, but it is certainly among the most thrilling

The LP was issued with an accompanying seven-inch disc on which Lewenthal talked listeners through the work with some fascinating insights. This is on disc 8 of the new set, as is Lewenthal's audio road map for his version of Liszt's *Totentanz*. This is an ingenious conflation of the original 1853 version (published in 1919, thanks to Busoni), known as the 'De profundis' version, and Liszt's revised edition published in 1865, the one generally heard today. Spoiler alert: the opening *tutti* will make you jump out of your skin. Its over-the-top, nerve-jangling gothic excesses are hugely enjoyable in the hands of Lewenthal and Sir Charles Mackerras (conducting the LSO).

The Henselt-Liszt disc was the first volume in a projected Raymond Lewenthal Romantic Revival Series. With an even less generous playing time (36'29"), Vol 2 (disc 4) again featured the LSO and the same amount of distortion and untidy ensemble, but now under the baton of Eleazar de Carvalho. It offered another

old warhorse: Rubinstein's Fourth Concerto with, as a 'filler', the last movement only of Scharwenka's Piano Concerto No 2. For pianistic finesse and panache, only Ponti and Hamelin (again) come close to Lewenthal in non-historic recordings of the Rubinstein (CBS claimed this to be the first stereo recording of the work, incidentally, but Ponti's was made six months earlier). Lewenthal speaks engagingly about both works on disc 8.

Not only disc 1 but also disc 5 is devoted to solo piano works by Alkan. Incredibly, apart from a number of piano rolls made by various artists (Harold Bauer, Rudolph Ganz and Egon Petri among them), no one had ever made a commercial recording of any of Alkan's music prior to Lewenthal in January 1965. And the resulting LP (4/66), though not a best-seller, attracted a cult following among collectors. It remains one of the great Alkan recitals and gave most people their first experience of the quirky, unpredictable, prophetic composer and the often jaw-dropping difficulties of his music. Lewenthal opens with *Le festin d'Ésope* and closes with the *Symphony for Solo Piano*, both works part of the massive *Douze Études dans tous les tons mineurs*. The LP also contains the second movement ('30 ans: quasi-Faust') from *Grande sonate: Les quatre âges*, still, I think, the only sonata whose four movements become progressively slower in tempo.

Lewenthal's second Alkan disc was recorded five years later, by which time John Ogdon, Ronald Smith and others had taken up the Alkan cause. For this, Lewenthal cannily chose a mix of repertoire that purposely emphasised Alkan's eccentricity, wild imagination and infinite variety: the chord clusters of *Les Diablotins*, for instance, the dotty *Marcia funebre sulla morte d'un pappagallo* ('Funeral March on the Death of a Parrot') for choir, three oboes and bassoon (conducted by Lewenthal on the LP), and the grim *Le tambour bat aux champs* – 'The terrors of Bosch and Breugel,' wrote Lewenthal in his sleeve notes, 'were not strangers of Alkan's psyche.'

Arguably, Lewenthal's most commercially successful solo disc was of Liszt's *Hexaméron* and the *Réminiscences de Norma* (1/67). It is also a perfect demonstration of his strengths and weaknesses: the staggering technique, the grand sweep of the conception, the majestic command of the keyboard, all made more human by some overpedalling, and a number of fluffs and slips that (maybe



'Brooding Romantic': Lewenthal introduced a generation to the music of Alkan and other forgotten composers

he was taking his cue from Cortot) appeared not to concern him in the slightest. 'Top priorities for him', Salter wrote in his *Gramophone* review, 'are Liszt's colour, dash and drama.'

With the exception of the *Réminiscences de Norma* (and the spoken-word extras), all the above titles have been previously issued on CD by RCA or Élan. Dedicated pianophiles will already have them. What neither they nor anyone else will have are the two CDs – and this set's USP – of Lewenthal playing the first two books of Liszt's *Années de pèlerinage* recorded in 1966. The intention was to record all three volumes, but the project was abandoned (tantalisingly, Lewenthal played the *Troisième année* at London's Wigmore Hall the following year). Perhaps it was because

he was difficult to deal with, unwilling to patch segments into the long takes he insisted upon, or perhaps the time, effort and expense involved in editing and putting together a releasable recording with his continuing involvement was more than RCA wanted to bother with; the issue remains a moot point, but in the event 12 hours of raw material were left to gather dust in the RCA vaults. Donald Manildi and Farhan Malik persuaded BMG/Sony Classical to issue these performances and it is they and renowned sound engineer Seth B Winner who are responsible for their first release. The results of their painstaking work are sensational, with Lewenthal at the top of his game, playing with all the electrifying broad sweep of a live performance.

Lewenthal could sometimes be impetuous and brash, but in 'Pastorale' and 'Au bord d'une source' he is a model of restraint and transparency. Turn to 'Orage' and a greater contrast would be hard to imagine, with thundering, razor-sharp octaves (truly *presto furioso*). As for the great 'Vallée d'Obermann', only Horowitz has exceeded Lewenthal in the neurotic intensity of the final pages, the last nine bars of which have been rewritten by Lewenthal.

The same energy and spontaneity of the first book of *Années de pèlerinage* is maintained in the second, replicating the live performance that can be heard on a (pirated) 1974 recording of a recital at Syracuse University. In the masterpiece of the *Deuxième année* volume, 'Après une lecture du Dante', Lewenthal is most attentive to the dynamics and notation in Liszt's manuscript where they contradict the small differences in the standard edition of the score. Perhaps it is not the tidiest or neatest *Dante* Sonata on disc, but it is certainly among the most thrilling. It was something of a Lewenthal party piece: somewhere in the BBC archive there is black-and-white film of him playing it.

All in all, this collection (retailing for about £35) is a must-have for all pianophiles and lovers of music-making in the grand manner. Perhaps Lewenthal's remaining recordings on Reader's Digest and Angel Records could be brought together and licensed for reissue (four of his Westminster LPs were issued in DG's 'The Liszt Legacy' in 2011); maybe the copyright owner of the recordings Lewenthal made of his own concerts might allow their release. We need to hear more (and ensure the legacy) of this intuitive, pioneering and charismatic pianist. **G**

THE RECORDING

Raymond Lewenthal: The Complete RCA and Columbia Album Collection **G**
Sony © ® 19075 85364-2



LP RELEASES

From Delius in 1934, via Leonard Bernstein's Christmas Day 1989 Beethoven Ninth to Keaton Henson's classical-folk rock fusion ... **Peter Quantrill** has been glued to his turntable

A post-Christmas box of vinyl delights

The age of CD may be passing, but the tradition of round tins under the Christmas tree lingers on. Lucky the discophile who ripped open the gift-wrap on December 25 to find not a selection of chocolate biscuits but Decca's 90th anniversary release of **Delius's** *Sea Drift*. Made at the Chenil Galleries in Chelsea one day in May 1929 and pressed over six 78 sides, this was the company's 18th scheduled recording, most of its previous sessions being unpublished and presumed lost.

Strange to say, the recording was soon withdrawn and never reissued on either LP or CD, perhaps because of contractual issues with the unnamed conductor (either Anthony Bernard or Julian Clifford, who conducted Elgar's arrangement of 'God save the King' at the same sessions). The contents of the tin take some explaining. The three 10-inch discs play at 33rpm; sides 1, 3 and 5 present a flat transfer of the original 78s, while the even-numbered sides offer a 'de-clicked' remastering by Andrew Walter of Abbey Road Studios. Walter's transfer plays at a lower level than the original, tonally richer but also noisier than another freely available online, and the chorus still distorts at climaxes. However, Roy Henderson's impassioned account of the solo part is faithfully caught, and anyone getting hold of one of the 900 copies will have what surely counts as a genuinely historic recording.

So, assuredly, does Bernstein's 'An die Freiheit' **Beethoven** Ninth of Christmas Day 1989, receiving a 30th anniversary reissue on LP and film. At almost 80 minutes, the performance is now spread over two LPs, one movement per side, whereas the original issue was mastered at a very low level to accommodate it on a single disc, with a break in the middle of the *Adagio*. Bernstein's reading had evolved little from his live Viennese recording of

a decade earlier (also superbly remastered by DG for vinyl, 10/18), more strongly marked at climaxes and more diffuse in the slow movement where the line sags like the Norns' rope, but the sense of occasion eventually asserts itself to overwhelming effect in the finale.

Another momentous event bound up with the fall of the Berlin Wall took place the following May, when Rafael Kubelík returned to his homeland to open the Prague Spring Festival. Transferred from Supraphon's 2011 remastering, this version of **Smetana's** *Ma vlast* ranks with the finest on record, and the LP mastering copes well with Smetana's recourse to patriotic percussion while making better sense of the Rudolfinum's capacious acoustic than previous digital remasterings.

Among the most celebrated of Russian émigrés, **Vladimir Horowitz** gave his final recital in Hamburg in May 1987 (he died just as the Soviet Union was falling). DG only released the North German radio tapes in 2008 but they reveal a pianist true to himself at the last. On this LP mastering (part of a five-album tribute to Horowitz including the lovable late Mozart concertos conducted by Carlo Maria Giulini), his bespoke Steinway is captured with a fullness of tone not often heard in his recordings. At first hearing, some sudden accents, changes of tack and left-hand manoeuvres in *Kinderszenen* and in Mozart's B flat Sonata, K333 may take you aback; often as not, though, they're in the score.

The last of these 'historic' LP issues dates from as recently as March 2017: a 400-copy edition of **Tchaikovsky's** *Pathétique* as recorded live by the Berlin Philharmonic and its new Chief Conductor, Kirill Petrenko. Perhaps the levels have been slightly tweaked from the CD release (7/19) so that the darkest recesses of the symphony do not disappear into the surface, but the stereo spread of

the sound-stage is outstandingly wide, with an unusual reach into the inner strings, to produce a home-listening experience hardly less engrossing than the surround-sound aesthetic of the Teodor Currentzis LP transfer on Sony Classical (6/18).

Currentzis himself is a vinyl-head, with six different hi-fi set-ups including a 78 gramophone. The French Alpha label has pressed a 45rpm cut of his 2011 **Mozart** Requiem. Do not do as I did and absent-mindedly play it at normal speed, or the performance will sound even more otherworldly than he perhaps intended. With 46 minutes of music spread over four sides, you will be up and down at the turntable much like an older generation of *Gramophone* readers, but the mastering brings with it an appreciable depth to the string bass and roundness to the basset clarinets, as well as extra presence to the carefully cast vocal soloists. The tinkling sleigh bells noted by David Threasher (8/11) at the transition from *Lacrymosa* to Mozart's abortive (and here uncompleted) 'Amen' form only the most overt touch of originality to a reading that, as ever with Currentzis, considers the work entirely afresh, and in the process rediscovers not only the Requiem's Baroque antecedents but also a supple intimacy of gesture that links it to the late chamber music.

PLACES WHERE THEY SING

From Harmonia Mundi comes a handsomely reproduced collection of five Alfred Deller albums, enclosing booklets with full texts and translation, mostly nostalgia-inducing facsimiles. Many readers who recall the original LPs will share the sentiment of Sir Michael Tippett on first hearing Deller sing Purcell in 1944: 'In that moment, the centuries rolled back.' Even at the end of his career he could scale his voice for the microphone, to project its delicate, clear and ringing timbres without contrivance, and Alexandra Evrard's new



Teodor Currentzis considers Mozart's Requiem 'entirely afresh', linking it to the composer's late chamber music

remasterings for this vinyl edition catch it to perfection.

The **'Music for a While'** album of songs has retained its status as a staple of the Purcell discography, while the others have somewhat fallen from view. However, few subsequent recordings of the sacred repertoire have approached the accumulating power of *Hear my Prayer* or the steady momentum of *Blow up the trumpet in Zion* (collected as **'O Solitude'**). Deller recorded three of the four major stage works – only *Dido* is missing – and the pick of them is **The Fairy Queen**, overshadowed by Britten's glamorously cast reorchestration on the one hand and more modern, more thoroughly 'authentic' recordings on the other. However, there is a modesty, gentleness and spirit of corporate understanding about Deller's achievement that remains unique.

As my pick of this LP round-up, *The Fairy Queen* is run close by Olivier Latry playing **Bach** at the organ of Notre-Dame, again not only for sentimental reasons: this is very much Latry's Bach, in the recreative spirit of his predecessor as titulaire at Notre-Dame, Pierre Cochereau, juiced up with naughty-but-nice supplementary voices in the G minor Fantasia, BWV542 (both Liszt's and Latry's) and taking fullest advantage of the organ's uniquely complex history and registration possibilities in the C minor Passacaglia to wind up with a blaze of Cochereau's *en chamade* reeds. With 77 minutes spread over four sides, the album has been reordered for LP so that the central grooves don't cringe

under the pressure of Latry and Cavallé-Coll at full tilt.

More defiantly not-guilty pleasure is brought by Jonas Kaufmann in **'Wien'**. Like his 'Caruso' album this is very much a studio production – with the Vienna Philharmonic apparently in a different studio altogether at times – but the judicious mix of operetta hits and rarities, and byplay with Rachel Willis-Sørensen (who urgently deserves an album of her own), brings out the best of Kaufmann in 'popular' rather than heroic character. The surfaces are quieter than some recent Sony Classical LPs and an insert sheet prints texts and translations.

NEW AND OLD ROMANTICS

Keaton Henson (b1988) is the latest in a line of English musicians mostly working in pop (more specifically, folk rock) who have found something original to say with 'classical' means – in the case of *Six Lethargies*, a string orchestra, extending a time-honoured lineage from Dowland's *Lachrymae* to Tippett's *Corelli* Fantasia. Moving through six stages of depression over the course of 70 minutes, Henson charts a surprisingly wide tonal and expressive terrain, sketched before him by Nick Drake and Arvo Pärt as well as his own 'Romantic Works' album of 2014, but now developed with an individual patience and confidence that allow him to string out the implications of a dissonant chord or a passacaglia sequence over extended spans. The LP edition is an all-enveloping studio production with deep-pile playing from the strings of the RLPO.

With a much older tonal world in mind, Sir John Barbirolli had long wished to record **Brahms** in Vienna, and EMI granted his wish a couple of years before he died. The results apparently disappointed him – he was hardly the first or the last conductor to find the VPO resting on its gilded laurels – but the middle symphonies at least have come up glowing with the fire of a living performing tradition handed down from Brahms to Barbirolli's teacher, Hans Richter. Even the more monumentally conceived readings of the First and Fourth gain from the amplitude of these LP transfers in a sumptuously presented box from Warner Classics, enhanced by photos of Barbirolli at work in the Musikverein and a new essay from Tully Potter.

As well as remastering analogue Philips albums from the days of quadraphonic sound, Pentatone has begun to issue back transfers of its own, 'new' recordings on LP. The process sometimes feels like a shotgun marriage of analogue and digital technology; not with Julia Fischer's 2007 recording of **Tchaikovsky**. Perhaps it's down to the free portamento, the fine variations of vibrato and the rapport with conductor Yakov Kreizberg, but her playing radiates an old-school warmth that makes this a classic recording of any era and feels right at home on LP. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Delius Sea Drift **Henderson**

Decca ③ ● 770 9302

Beethoven Symphony No 9 **Bernstein**

DG ② ● 483 7443

Smetana Ma Vlast **Czech PO / Kubelík**

Supraphon ② ● SU4255-1

'The Last Concert' **Horowitz**

DG ② ● 483 7593

Tchaikovsky Symphony No 6 BPO / K Petrenko

Berliner Philharmoniker ● BHPR190262

Mozart Requiem **MusicAeterna / Currentzis**

Alpha ② ● ALPHA468

Purcell 'Music for a While' **Deller**

Harmonia Mundi ● HMM33 249

Purcell 'O Solitude' **Deller Consort**

Harmonia Mundi ● HMM33 247

Purcell The Fairy Queen

Stour Music Festival / Deller

Harmonia Mundi ③ ● HMM33 2313

Bach Organ Works **Latry**

La Dolce Volta ② ● LDV690

'Wien' **Kaufmann; VPO / A Fischer**

Sony Classical ② ● 19075 95040-1

Henson Six Lethargies **RLPO / Knoop**

Mercury ② ● 481 8679

Brahms Symphonies Nos 1-4 **VPO / Barbirolli**

Warner Classics ④ ● 19029 561189-7

Tchaikovsky Violin Concerto etc

J Fischer; Russian National Orch / Kreizberg

Pentatone ② ● PTC5186 804

BOX-SET *Round-up*

Rob Cowan immerses himself in some appealing box-set releases for Beethoven 250



The **Belcea Quartet**'s Beethoven quartet cycle for Alpha Classics has to be one of the most sensitive options of recent years, every performance focused with maximum clarity and great intensity. The slow movement of Op 127 truly is a sublime journey, the swirling finale of Op 18 No 1 an excellent demonstration of the group's fleet-footed virtuosity, the opening of Op 95 full of fury though finely attenuated. The quartet's pooled sound, which employs vibrato though never to excess, is lean though warmly expressive, and always there's that sense that what you're hearing is the result of long-pondered musical thinking. I'd rate it alongside such recent top-ranking digital contenders as Cuarteto Casals (Harmonia Mundi, yet to be completed) and Quartetto di Cremona (Audite).

As to Sony Classical's gauntlet-throwing **Beethoven: Legendary Recordings** collection, the quartet corner includes the Tokyo Quartet in Op 18 Nos 1, 4 and 6, the Juilliard in Op 59 Nos 1 and 3 (these are exceptional performances) and for the late quartets that are included – Opp 127 and 131 – the more mellow 1951-52 recordings by the Budapest Quartet, in general superior to their stereo remakes (which I also enjoy, warts and all). The Stern-Rose-Istomin Trio are at their lustrous, energetic best in the Trios Nos 5, 6 and 7, and in the Triple Concerto with Ormandy and the Philadelphia Orchestra, which is very handsomely performed. Jascha Heifetz offers us a lissom, sweet-centred account of the Violin Concerto under Charles Munch, the First Piano Trio and the String Trio Op 9 No 2 (with William Primrose and Gregor Piatigorsky), wonderful string-playing by any standards. Violin sonatas with pianist Robert Casadesus and violinist Zino Francescatti (Nos 1, 5 and 9) promote a winning combination of violinistic warmth and chiselled pianism. Other featured works include piano music entrusted to Rudolf Serkin (compelling in the *Moonlight*, *Appassionata* and *Pathétique*

Sonatas, less wholly convincing in long-unissued accounts of the last three sonatas), as well as Charles Rosen playing the *Hammerklavier*, Igor Levit's rigorously argued (and *Gramophone* Award-winning) set of the *Diabelli* Variations and admirable performances of various sonatas played by Murray Perahia, Sviatoslav Richter and Vladimir Horowitz. Glenn Gould is nimble but mono-dynamic in the first two piano concertos, and Arthur Rubinstein offers a patrician *Emperor* under Erich Leinsdorf. As for the symphonies, there's Munch in the Ninth, Bruno Walter in the First, Leonard Bernstein in the *Eroica* and Eighth, Fritz Reiner in the Fifth and Seventh and George Szell in the Second, Fourth and Sixth. None of these performances falls beneath an elevated standard, but 'legendary'? Maybe the Heifetz recordings and the Budapest 'late' quartets; and certainly Bernstein's New York *Missa solemnis*, a stereo trailblazer when it was first issued in the early 1960s and still a strong contender. As to the others, 'exceptionally fine' is how I'd put it, but in any event well worth the modest asking price (as low as £40).

Bernstein's bullish New York recordings find him in fine fettle and much of the playing is quite marvellous

A box devoted in the main to **Leonard Bernstein**'s New York Philharmonic symphony recordings (the complete cycle) plus that same *Missa solemnis* featured in the collection reviewed above plus other works is often of interest. For example in the Fourth Symphony, the quiet development section, where Bernstein is one of the few conductors of his generation to keep the music moving rather than reducing the tempo. Not even Toscanini does that. There are two quite different versions of the Seventh Symphony (1958, 1964), the earlier of the two more prone to point-

making, and there's a famously swift *Eroica*. The Fifth is followed by the absorbing talk 'How a great symphony was written'. The *Pastoral* is notable for its memorably joyous finale and there's an engaging programme of overtures. True, Bernstein went on to refine his Beethoven style with the Vienna Philharmonic (DG, plus the *Missa solemnis* with the Concertgebouw) but these more bullish New York recordings find him in fine fettle and much of the playing is quite marvellous.

In the case of **Arturo Toscanini**, comparison between different recordings reaches a whole different level of complexity. RCA's budget reissue detailed below features recordings with the NBC Symphony Orchestra made between the late 1940s and the early 1950s and was for years considered, alongside Toscanini's pre-war recordings with the New York Philharmonic and the BBC Symphony orchestras (as well as a few earlier versions with the NBC Symphony), the definitive presentation of the maestro's Beethoven on disc. Then, just prior to the advent of CD (and on numerous occasions since), along came the faster, wilder, more keenly inflected and frequently freer performances taped in concert during 1939 and (for the *Missa solemnis*) 1940 (Music & Arts). To compare the two versions of the Second Symphony's slow introduction is to learn volumes about Toscanini's evolving approach to the music, just as to play the openings of the *Missa* in succession (from 1935 – New York Philharmonic on Dante Lys – 1940 and 1953, the one included here) is sure evidence that in general as he grew older Toscanini opted for gradually increasing tempos. Still, this 'standard' RCA cycle is characteristic, the closing moments of the Seventh's first movement and the *Pastoral*'s Storm projected with explosive force, the rest raging, sometimes singing with unstinting resolve, always with merciless clarity and that signature honesty. In other words, truly Beethovenian. It's a fairly well-recorded miracle to behold too, and luckily for us if you look hard enough



Cécile Ousset's early 1970s set of the complete Beethoven variations culminates in a magnificent Diabellis

there are plenty more (unpublished) Toscanini Beethoven miracles that make for fascinating comparisons with it, even beyond the 1939-40 cycle. This particular presentation comes with no notes.

Having already spoken on a *Gramophone* YouTube video about **Ronald Brautigam's** fortepiano versions of Beethoven's music for keyboard, specifically the solo works, here I merely reiterate the main points I made then: that although the instrument and its novel range of colours will for many be the principal point of interest, what really matters is Brautigam's credentials as a Beethoven player, which on the evidence of his recordings for BIS are formidable. What makes his readings of the sonatas, variations and shorter works so gripping is his deep understanding of the musical texts, and his ability to convey them with such spontaneity. As Nikolaus Harnoncourt said to me years ago (in the context of discussing 'authentic' performances of Bach), what prompted him to choose period instruments was less a question of 'hearing the music as Bach heard it' than hearing it sound better, more compelling, than it has ever sounded before. In certain respects, that's also true of Brautigam's Beethoven where the music often emerges as if freshly orchestrated. The 'Complete Variations, Bagatelles and Piano Pieces' follow on from BIS's box-set of the sonatas (including rarely heard early works), which is already available on BIS2000 (nine CDs). Brautigam's new two-disc set of the concertos, incidentally (reviewed next issue), is also well worth investigating.

While **Mari Kodama's** set of the Concertos 'Nos 0-5' with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin is in general very nicely played and conducted (by Kodama's husband Kent Nagano), it doesn't quite level up with the most inspired versions available. Best is the Triple Concerto with the violinist Kolja Blacher and cellist Johannes Moser, which wears an appropriately sunny demeanour and is very light on its feet. The Concerto No 0 is the work of a teenager that survives in short score only (an orchestral score was prepared in the early part of the last century based on those annotations), ebullient music further adapted by the Naganos so as to 'make audible the exuberant freshness and sense of awakening in the young, almost childlike Beethoven's writing'. It's an enjoyable if not exactly memorable listen. Also included is the B flat Rondo, WoO6, and the *Eroica* Variations.

Speaking of variations brings me to one of the finest piano reissues of recent months, a seven-CD collection of solo recordings that the French pianist **Cécile Ousset** originally made for Decca France between 1971 and 1976. Ousset's often dazzling performances of the complete Beethoven variations, superbly articulated all of them, culminate in a performance of the *Diabellis* that has it all: technical brilliance, clarity, provocative gesturing, profundity, wit, humanity, mystery (especially towards the close of the work) and a keen appreciation of the music's questioning nature. Surely Beethoven's mighty solo piano masterpiece has never

been more convincingly represented on disc. The remainder of the set ranges widely and the only disc I recall having previously heard is a French programme consisting of Debussy (four *Études*), Satie (three *Gymnopédies*), Saint-Saëns (two études) and Chabrier (two of the *Pièces pittoresques* and the *Bourrée fantasque*). Chabrier's 'Idylle' is remarkable in the way Ousset stresses the bass line, lending the music an almost Brahmsian aura. In fact, hers was the first version I encountered, and I thought I must be hearing a piece of late Brahms. Both the 'Scherzo-valse' and the *Bourrée fantasque* bristle with a keen sense of *joie de vivre*, the *Bourrée* brilliant beyond belief. Then there's Schumann's *Carnaval* and Brahms's *Paganini* Variations, thoughtful pianism full of life and imaginative touches. As played by Ousset, Prokofiev's Ten Pieces, Op 12, resembles a supplementary set of *Visions fugitives*, while Rachmaninov's five *Morceaux de fantaisie* and *Humoresque* suggest sincere engagement with the composer's style. This is truly a peach of a set.

And so to **Paul Lewis's** Beethoven sonatas, Vol 2 of which was winner of *Gramophone's* Recording of the Year Award in 2008, and I can't do better than quote Bryce Morrison, who in the Awards issue for that year wrote: 'Paul Lewis's three-disc second volume of his Beethoven sonata cycle is of such eloquence and mastery that it deserves a book rather than a review ... These are early days but Lewis's superbly recorded and presented Beethoven may well turn out to be the most musicianly and ultimately satisfying of all recorded Beethoven piano sonata cycles.' Having received repeated accolades in these pages, the contents of Harmonia Mundi's 14-CD set of the complete sonatas, *Diabelli* Variations and concertos will be much sought after. **G**

THE RECORDINGS

Beethoven Belcea Quartet

Alpha **Ⓜ** **Ⓢ** ALPHA469

Beethoven: Legendary Recordings

Sony Classical **Ⓢ** (25 discs) 19075 97375-2

Beethoven Bernstein

Sony Classical **Ⓢ** (25 discs) 19075 97048-2

Beethoven Toscanini

Sony Classical **Ⓢ** **Ⓢ** 19075 96477-2

Beethoven Brautigam

BIS **Ⓜ** **Ⓢ** BIS2403

Beethoven Kodama, Nagano et al

Berlin Classics **Ⓜ** **Ⓢ** 0301304BC

Beethoven et al Ousset

Decca Eloquence **Ⓜ** **Ⓢ** 482 7395

Beethoven Lewis

Harmonia Mundi **Ⓜ** **Ⓢ** HMX290 8880/93

REPLAY

Rob Cowan's monthly survey of historic reissues and archive recordings



Piano mastery, and much more

Few pianists of the 20th century's latter half were as accomplished or as deeply musical as Czech-born **Rudolf Firkušný** – a great chamber player who also excelled in the major concertos and solo piano works. Sony's 'Complete RCA and Columbia Album Collection' offers countless examples of his consistently engaged playing style, which focused on both detail and structure and displayed a tonal palette that allowed for infinite expressive variety. A combination of discipline and flexibility (not dissimilar to the playing of Arthur Rubinstein in his prime) make his recordings, or most of them, a joy to listen to. This particular collection includes a number of early recordings that will be new to most British collectors, having never been released here before, for example Schumann's C major Fantasy from 1949: fiery and lightly sprung; and a similarly combustible Chopin Sonata in B minor from 1951 (not to be confused with the pianist's better-known remake for what is now Warner Classics). As so often happens with these Sony boxes, items crop up that just happen to have been part of an album but that don't actually involve the featured artist. For example, Firkušný's intense collaboration with violinist Tossy Spivakovsky in Beethoven's last violin sonata shared vinyl space with 'Violin Favourites' accompanied by pianist Artur Balsam: five pieces, including what must surely prove a benchmark account of Sarasate's *Introduction and Tarantella*.

Firkušný adapts wholeheartedly to the worlds of Hanson's Piano Concerto (with the composer conducting) and Barber's *Excursions* (*Knoxville: Summer of 1915*, with soprano Eleanor Steber and William Strickland conducting, is also included), but who could resist Firkušný's way with Schubert's eight impromptus – the melting loveliness of the G flat, or the way that high and low voices alternate in the central section of the first piece of D935, like the impatient exchanges of lovers during a midnight tryst. Dvořák's Piano Concerto is twice represented, the first version, dating from 1954, with the Cleveland Orchestra under George Szell using the

version that was edited and cut by Firkušný's one-time piano teacher Vilém Kurz (a superb performance in spite of the questionable edition). Then, in 1990, once Russia's grip on what would soon become the Czech Republic had lifted, Firkušný switched to the uncut Urtext, with Václav Neumann conducting the Czech Philharmonic. Other recordings of the concerto with Firkušný exist, but these two are surely the best known. Also twice represented are Janáček's solo piano works (1952-53, 1989) and the Concertino for piano and chamber ensemble (1954 with the Philadelphia Woodwind Quintet, then in 1991 with various Czech soloists), whereas the Capriccio (*Defiance*) for piano left hand and chamber ensemble is represented on just one occasion (1991, with Czech soloists). The two sets of solo piano works witness some marked contrasts in tempo, especially in the second movement of Sonata *I.X.1905*: a duration of 4'59" in 1953, and 6'43" in 1989. Both sets invite revealing comparison with Firkušný's later recordings for DG with Rafael Kubelík directing.

The chamber music inclusions number cello sonatas by Chopin and Prokofiev with Gregor Piatigorsky among their ranks, the playing of both artists bright and refined; Dvořák's two Piano Quartets, the Second Piano Quintet and the Bagatelles with the Juilliard Quartet (for my money, this 1975 version of Quartet No 2 in E flat has never been matched); and Firkušný's 1990 remake of Dvořák's Quintet No 2 with the Ridge Quartet, with the addition of No 1 this time. While I still prefer Firkušný with the Juilliard in the Second Quintet, the remake is also pretty good. Add collaborations with cellist János Starker (sonatas by Firkušný's friend Martinů), Martinů solo piano works and concertos (Nos 2, 3 and 4), a programme of songs with Gabriela Beňačková and some early recordings of solo Mozart and you have a truly marvellous set, very well annotated by Jed Distler. Now, Warner, a plea if I may: could you please follow suit with a box of *your* Firkušný recordings (various concertos, duo-sonata and solo works and, most

memorably, Smetana's Czech Dances)? That would be most welcome.

Happily, **George Szell** has fared extremely well on the reissue front recently – though, again, Warner could profitably attend to his pre-war European recordings and later Cleveland sessions. Generally good sound graces much of Profil's collection. Chosen selections include recordings with the Concertgebouw Orchestra, most memorably music for *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (with a fabulous Scherzo) and *Rosamunde*, the LPO and Sir Clifford Curzon in a fine *Emperor* Concerto, and, inevitably, the Cleveland Orchestra. Interestingly, Profil opts for Szell's first account of Mozart's Piano Concerto No 24 with Robert Casadesus, where the combination of pianistic poise and strong-arm conducting makes a big impression. Only Casadesus's first (1937) version under Eugène Bigot (recently transferred to CD by APR) strikes me as scaling parallel heights, especially in the soloist's first entry, where pathos is expressed in the simplest terms, something that is evident on both versions. Dvořák's Eighth Symphony is entrusted to the Concertgebouw Orchestra (Decca, mono); it's good, but nowhere near as good as the Cleveland Symphony *From the New World* that follows it, where the *Largo* is both sculpted and expressive. And those string choirs: utter perfection! Schumann's First and Second Symphonies are included, the former in stereo, the latter in mono, and there are crisply articulated concerto performances with Leon Fleisher. Other works by Haydn, Mozart and Weber complete a deal that's worth considering – though it's hardly 'the best of'.

THE RECORDINGS



'Rudolf Firkušný: The Complete RCA and Columbia Album Collection'
Sony Classical © 18 19075 92281-2



'George Szell: Concertos and Symphonies'
Stern, Casadesus, Fleisher, Curzon; Cleveland Orch et al
Profil © 10 PH19018



Rudolf Firkušný: a great chamber player who also excels in the major concertos and solo piano works

Badura-Skoda on DG

Days prior to this pianist's passing on September 25, I had acquired DG's 20-CD 90th birthday tribute and was enjoying recordings I hadn't heard since vinyl. Pride of place goes to the five numbered Beethoven piano concertos where Hermann Scherchen conducts the Vienna State Opera Orchestra, the outcome an evident meeting of minds, especially in the Third Concerto and the latter part of the Fourth's slow movement, where Scherchen subdues his forces like distant rumbling thunder. Various piano trio recordings with violinist Jean Fournier and cellist Antonio Janigro are also noteworthy: the two large-scale Schubert trios prove among the best available, and the second movement of the E flat is like a relentless hike working towards an overwhelming climax. Mozart concertos Nos 19, 20, 22, 23, 24 and 27 are memorably elegant, not dissimilar to Casadesu's Mozart in their combination of composure and pathos. You'll hear well-judged accounts of the two Chopin concertos under Artur Rodzinski, Tchaikovsky's First under Sir Adrian Boult and the Scriabin under Henry Swoboda. Brahms is represented by the First Piano Trio and a warm, sonorously expressed account of the Third Piano Sonata, more introspective than most though the Scherzo is pretty assertive, as is the darkly brooding G minor Rhapsody on a separate 'encores' CD. Badura-Skoda's Chopin includes a nifty 'Minute' Waltz and a flexibly impassioned reading of the wonderful seventh study from Op 25. As for Chopin's larger structures, there are masterly performances of the four Scherzos, the Barcarolle and the F minor Fantasia, all played with dramatic flair but without affectation. Elsewhere,

there's Bach, Franck, Haydn, more Schubert and Mozart (the latter two are also represented by music for two pianos and/or piano duet with Jörg Demus), Schumann, and various shorter works. An excellent set, generally well transferred.

THE RECORDING



'The Paul Badura-Skoda Edition'

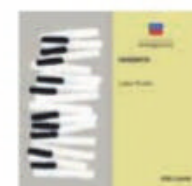
DG © (20 discs) 479 8065

Laretei in Hindemith

Hindemith's *Ludus tonalis* (1942) ('Game of Tones') has been called 'a 20th-century composer's reappraisal' of Bach's '48' (written nine years before Shostakovich's '48'). It comprises 12 fugues, 11 interludes, a prelude and a postlude that cover an amazingly wide range of expression. Hindemith novices couldn't hope for a more accessible starting point. Memorable recordings by Richter and McCabe et al have long been available, but this reissue of Estonian-born Käbi Laretei's 1965 Philips recording warrants special praise. Ingmar Bergman's fourth wife (1959-69) Laretei had a tragic early life – undergoing an abortion after being raped by a Soviet soldier, then with her family escaping to Sweden as a refugee. In happier times post-war, Hindemith coached Laretei for her concert renditions of *Ludus tonalis*, though sadly he never lived to hear her record the work. If he had, he would have been ecstatic with the results. And the music? Try the helter-skelter of Interlude No 4 (track 9), the jazziness of Fugue No 5, and Fugue No 6 in E flat (track 12), which opens in the manner of Ravel's 'Oiseaux tristes' but then

gains in intensity. Then there's the nobility of Interlude No 7 (track 15) and the witty Fuga No 9 (track 18). The peaceful Interlude No 9 (track 19) leads to a fugue that tiptoes in a quite different direction. And on it goes, including the kaleidoscopic Postlude, one subtle gem after another. A wonderful work superbly performed and very well recorded.

THE RECORDING



Hindemith *Ludus tonalis*

Käbi Laretei *pf*

Decca Eloquence © 484 0142

Kleiber and Martinon

Quite a few of these late 1940s recordings with the LPO are of exceptional artistic interest. Take the *Andante larghetto* from *Berenice*, one of Handel's most glorious melodies sustained under Kleiber's baton with hypnotic control. Although Mozart's 40th Symphony lacks its first movement's exposition repeat, the exposition itself is stated powerfully enough not to need it, and the finale is truly *Allegro assai*. Beethoven's *Pastoral* is another winner, especially the tranquil second movement; elsewhere, the peasants are frisky and notably light on their feet, the storm really crackles (the playing achieves cut-glass precision), and beyond the rising flute motif, the evenly paced finale is profoundly peaceful. Kleiber's way with Josef Strauss's *Sphärenklänge* and Johann II's *Der Zigeunerbaron* Overture is sheer perfection: his pacing of each section, the lilt of his phrasing and the way he speeds up or broadens according to the dictates of the musical line. Both performances are object lessons in how to play this music, and Dvořák's *Carnival* is almost as good.

The Martinon sequence opens with 'Farewell, you native hills' from Tchaikovsky's *The Maid of Orleans* sung with conviction by mezzo Eugenia Zareska. Martinon also offers Chabrier's *Suite pastorale*, a good performance if hardly exceptional, and Ravel's *Le tombeau de Couperin*, where the second movement Forlane is miles too fast – a choice perhaps influenced by shellac side lengths? In these excellent transfers, the orchestra sounds more in awe of Kleiber than of Martinon. Alan Sanders writes informed booklet notes.

THE RECORDING



'Erich Kleiber, Jean Martinon: the Decca 78s'

Decca Eloquence © ②

482 9386

Classics RECONSIDERED



Mark Pullinger
and **Tim Ashley** revisit
Monteux's legendary
1959 recording of
Ravel's *Daphnis et Chloé*
with the LSO on Decca



Ravel

Daphnis et Chloé

ROH Chorus; LSO / Pierre Monteux

Decca

There is only one word for this work, this performance, and this recording – ravishing. Whoever it was that meant to dismiss *Daphnis et Chloé* by calling it ‘that exotic flower which sprang from the romantic dunghill’ spoke truer than he knew; the musical soil of those days was indeed more richly fertilised than it is now, and no more wonderful bloom sprang from it than Ravel’s great ballet. It remains unsurpassed as a dazzling feat of harmonic, textural and orchestral imagination – in the sphere of sensuous beauty.

If anyone knows how to make it dazzle, it is Pierre Monteux, who directed the first

performance way back in 1912, and has been intimately associated with it ever since. Now over 80, he still brings to it the most sensitive awareness of every subtlest nuance of phrasing, rubato, and tone-colour, and, more astonishing, an infallible rhythmic precision and an electrifying drive. He inspires the London Symphony Orchestra to caress the music in a splendidly un-British way, and the Covent Garden Chorus to produce some shouts of truly Bacchic frenzy.

The stereo recording is vivid, glowing, and spacious. Only once is anything lost: the muted horns and trumpets after the tambourine rhythm has got going, near the end; and only once does anything intrude unduly: the rather strained-sounding utterances of the tenors just before the final

climax. The mono issue is equally fine; in fact, it scores one point over the stereo, the final shouts of the chorus even more thrilling, being given more prominence. The mono disc has one rival: Ansermet (Decca), which costs less, but you’ll have to pay a musical price for financial economy. He is a renowned exponent of the work, and much of his interpretation is beautiful, but he is not so rhythmically exciting as Monteux, nor is his rhythmic control as sure (figs 17, 210); moreover, the turn-over comes in a ridiculous place (fig 93), whereas the present version breaks sensibly at fig 83. The recording is very clear, but lacks the lustre of the new one, and is a little restricted at the climaxes.

Deryck Cooke (12/59)

Mark Pullinger ‘Ravishing’ is the word used by Deryck Cooke in the opening paragraph of his review of Pierre Monteux’s LSO *Daphnis et Chloé* recording, set down and issued in 1959. Does it ravish you, Tim?

Tim Ashley Yes, totally, but it wasn’t always so, which, I suppose, is bound up with my relationship with the work itself. My balletomane parents had a copy of what I imagine was the original pressing, so I first heard it as a teenager. But the piece itself initially fazed me: when you’re 16, some of it doesn’t perhaps have the same blatant immediacy of Richard Strauss and early Stravinsky, which I was keen on at the time. It wasn’t until years later, when I started to listen to the work in concert and saw it danced – in Frederick Ashton’s choreography – at Covent Garden that I began to fall in love with it. So I came back to Monteux comparatively late.

MP At the time I began building my collection, I was easily seduced by digital recordings, so Charles Dutoit and the Montreal Symphony Orchestra were my initial guides to French repertoire. Their *Daphnis et Chloé* – released by Decca on CD (as a single track!) – was my introduction to Ravel’s ballet. It was a demonstration disc in its day, although I find it has a gauzy, slightly distanced acoustic. I later bought Monteux’s LSO recording when it was reissued as part of The Classic Sound series from Decca, and suddenly I fell in love with the work – I reacted to it in a way that was different from before.

TA Dutoit impressed me, too, though a reissue of Ansermet’s old Decca recording was the first one I actually bought. And I still admire it, though I think Monteux’s in many ways supersedes it.

MP I listened again to that Ansermet recording recently and, as admirable as the conducting is, I find the woodwind of the Suisse Romande Orchestra rather sour to the taste.

TA The OSR sound under Ansermet doesn’t appeal to everyone, I agree. But how much of Monteux’s authority with the work derives from a lifetime’s familiarity with it? He conducted the world premiere in 1912, after all.

MP What a voluptuous period of musical history blossomed via Sergei Diaghilev’s Ballets Russes in Paris at that time, Tim. *Petrushka* in 1911, *L’après-midi d’un faune* and *Daphnis et Chloé* in 1912, *Jeux* and *The Rite of Spring* in 1913 – all conducted by Monteux! These works gave the young conductor his big break. A lot of conductors can be dismissive of ballet, but if you’ve conducted these works in the theatre,



Pierre Monteux (1875-1964), whose *Daphnis et Chloé* is under scrutiny, conducted the work's premiere in 1912

surely it has to give you a special insight into the scores?

TA Yes, I think it confers an understanding of tempo, pace and dramatic flow that is crucial to the integrity of the interpretation. Recordings of ballet music must, I think, give us an awareness that the work is danceable in the theatre; pull the tempos around too much, and you're in some ways being foreign to the spirit of the score.

MP Paavo Järvi once told me that, having conducted ballet in Oslo, he could envisage the precise stage action of, say, *Petrushka* whenever he conducted it in concert. By the time Monteux came to record *Daphnis* in 1959, 'Maître' had lived with Ravel's ballet for nearly 50 years, and I think that insight really shows.

TA Yes, indeed, I think it does. There's a wonderful sense here of the narrative proceeding in a single, integrated arc, whereas in lesser hands it can seem episodic. And it strikes me that Monteux's understanding of mood is marvellously acute in a work that continually criss-crosses the thin dividing line between sensuousness and sensuality. Many conductors, I think, muddy the distinction.

MP That's a really interesting point, Tim. I find Monteux's handling of

'Lever du jour' truly sensuous without becoming overheated.

TA Until we get to the closing Bacchanale, you get a real sense here that *Daphnis* and *Chloé* express their feelings for each other in a way that is almost chaste, in contrast to *Lycéion*'s more overt sexuality (those impertinent clarinets), and the altogether more dangerous presence of *Bryaxis*.

What do you think of Monteux's relationship with the LSO, meanwhile? Two years after the recording was made, he went on to become their chief conductor, at the age of 86.

MP I love the fact that he insisted on a 25-year contract – you can sense a real twinkle behind that impressive walrus moustache! It's a relationship that yielded some marvellous recordings, including a sumptuous Rimsky-Korsakov *Sheherazade* and my favourite account of the *Enigma* Variations. The playing on this *Daphnis* is outstanding, particularly the woodwind – just listen to the Pantomime (track 11). Monteux allows the flautist all the time in the world to weave languorous phrases – a real cousin to Debussy's faun. Cooke wrote that Monteux 'inspires the London Symphony Orchestra to caress the music in a splendidly un-British way'. Would you be able to tell that this is not a French orchestra?

TA Probably not. The playing has all the qualities of clarity, precision, textural subtlety and detail that most of us tend to associate with French orchestras at their finest. Place Monteux's recording beside Jean Martinon's more overtly sensual 1974 EMI performance with the Orchestre de Paris and the Paris Opéra Chorus, and you notice that Martinon opts, deliberately perhaps, for a slightly warmer string sound, sometimes at the expense of detail, though the woodwind and brass are directly comparable in their clarity of tone.

MP In the Monteux, there are a few moments of horn wobble in the 'Danse légère et gracieuse de *Daphnis*', but the trumpet articulation is fabulous, particularly in the 'Danse générale' in Part 1. Although he keeps the rhythms tight, you sense Monteux giving the LSO free rein to sculpt their woodwind solos.

TA What do you think of the choral singing, though? There's a tendency, I think, to underestimate the choir's importance to the work's soundscape, as well as the exacting nature of Ravel's choral writing, particularly in the *a cappella* introduction to Part 2. The Covent Garden Opera Chorus (as it then was) would, of course, have performed the work in the theatre, as Ashton's version had been in the repertoire of the Royal Ballet (known as Sadler's Wells Ballet till 1956) since 1951.

MP Familiarity with the work certainly helps (I always love hearing the Royal Opera Chorus in *Daphnis*). And producer John Culshaw and engineer Alan Reeve place them perfectly in Decca's typically spacious early stereo recording. On most days, Monteux's is my desert island/Building a Library choice for Ravel's masterpiece. Is it yours, Tim?

TA Yes, indeed. I still have a soft spot for the Ansermet, flawed though it is, simply because I have lived with it for such a long time. And I also hugely admire François-Xavier Roth's 2016 recording with Les Siècles for Harmonia Mundi, with its period-instrument sound that tells us so much about how Ravel originally envisaged the work's sonorities. But Monteux's recording still gets to the heart of the score more subtly and persuasively than any other version I know, which is why, I think, it's still considered a classic, and remains the benchmark for many. **G**

Books



Nigel Simeone welcomes a useful and varied book on Brahms:

'Readers are likely to want to dip into this book, and anyone doing so will come across some fascinating material'

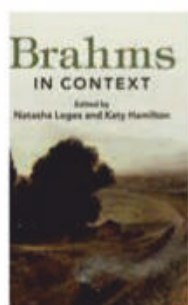


Peter Quantrill has mixed feelings about a biography of Alma Mahler:

'Haste approaches her subject not as a musicologist but as a storyteller – the pages turn rapidly, with a director's eye for the telling glance'

Brahms in Context

Edited by Natasha Loges and Katy Hamilton
Cambridge University Press, HB, 432pp, £79.99
ISBN 978-1-107-16341-6



This book is part of a series from CUP intended to explore the contexts in which composers lived and worked.

As the editors point out in their Preface, this is not the place to look for commentary on Brahms's music, but rather to discover more about his personal life, his friendships and various aspects of the world in which he lived: 'If we have omitted repertoire, we have managed to include reading habits, religion and recipes. Our hope is to inspire new ways of understanding this endlessly fascinating figure.' Their hope is amply fulfilled by many of the essays in this substantial book.

The arrangement is under five broad categories: 'Personality, People and Places', 'Identities, Environments and Influences', 'Performance and Publishing', 'Society and Culture' and 'Reception and Legacy'. Short chapters (39 of them, each around 3000 words in length) are placed within one of these categories in order to make a coherent whole. Among the authors we find several leading Brahms scholars – the likes of Michael Musgrave, Kurt and Renate Hofmann, Walter Frisch, Michael Struck and Katrin Eich – as well as others with particular areas of interest relating to Brahms: for instance, the chapter on 'Science and Technology' is co-written by Myles W Jackson, Professor of the History of Science at Princeton, and 'Visual Arts' is co-written by William Vaughan, Professor Emeritus in History of Art at Birkbeck College. The editors themselves are both authorities on Brahms and their previous collaborations included *Brahms in the Home and the Concert Hall* (CUP: 2014); both are significant contributors to this volume as well as the guiding hands behind it.

Readers are likely to want to dip into this book, and anyone doing so will come across some fascinating material. For example, William Horne's delightful survey of Brahms's 'Personal Habits' includes eyewitness accounts of his enthusiasms for walking, simple dining, a slightly ponderous sense of humour, buying rides for poor children in the Prater (and giving them sweets – a sign of more innocent times than ours), and a charming account of Clara Schumann rolling cigarettes for him. Almost all of the chapters draw extensively on contemporary evidence, much of it not readily available in English, and potentially rather dry topics are brought to life with intelligent writing: 'Copyright' (Friedemann Kowohl) and 'Publishers' (Peter Schmitz) are far more absorbing than their titles might suggest.

One of Katy Hamilton's own contributions is a chapter on 'Private Music-Making' which offers engrossing details about the private trial performances on two pianos of Brahms's symphonies given at Ehrbar's piano workshop in Vienna. Natasha Loges's contributions include an absorbing account of the singers who worked closely with Brahms. That is the first chapter in the section on 'Performance and Publishing', one of the most rewarding sections in the book, and one with the most tangible connection to Brahms's output, specifically those who played his music and those who disseminated it. But just as important for an understanding of his creative personality is an exploration of his own beliefs, eloquently discussed in chapters such as those by David Brodbeck ('Politics and Religion') and Nicole Grimes ('Philosophy'). The importance of places in Brahms's life is underlined from the very first chapter: 'Childhood in Hamburg', a richly detailed account by Renate and Kurt Hofmann of the city in which he grew up. One of the more intriguing sidelines of Brahms's career was his editing of music by others. While his work on the Breitkopf & Härtel Collected Editions of Mozart and Schubert is well known, Peter Schmitz's

chapter, 'As Editor', includes a focus on Brahms's editing of Chopin, and he illustrates the first page of the Barcarolle, heavily annotated by Brahms, which reveals that this was serious hands-on work. Oddly, there's no chapter on Brahms the Collector – it would have complemented the discussion of his editorial work as well as being an interesting topic in its own right – though items in his collection are frequently mentioned in other chapters. Technical jargon is kept to a minimum, and terminology is usually clear and unpretentious – this is a book that can certainly be enjoyed by the interested reader as well as the specialist – though in at least three places when discussing publications, authors use the term 'frontispiece' when what they mean (and illustrate) is 'title page'.

The book is well presented, with a number of well-reproduced (and well-chosen) illustrations, and the editors have clearly made an effort to ensure that the whole project hangs together, not least by including unobtrusive cross-references from one chapter to others as relevant. More detailed exploration of topics is made possible by the lists of 'Further Reading' at the end of each chapter. Appropriately enough, *Brahms in Context* is dedicated to the memory of Robert Pascall, whose own work (as writer, analyst and editor) was such an inspiring contribution to Brahms scholarship. Several of his enthusiasms are reflected here and he would, I think, have loved this book. **Nigel Simeone**

Passionate Spirit

The Life of Alma Mahler
By Cate Haste

Bloomsbury, HB, 496pp, £26
ISBN 978-1-408-87832-3



History has not been kind to Alma Mahler. You don't have to be a Buddhist to see her portrait, blackening



Aspects of Brahms: Loges and Hamilton's new book offers different slants on the composer's world

over the decades since her death in 1964, as a clear case of karma. More vividly than ever before thanks to Cate Haste's even-handed biography, she takes shape before us as a sad reversal of nominative determinism, a woman who, lavishly gifted to begin with, took far more than she ever gave back, leaving behind her a trail of champagne bottles and bewitched and bewildered men. 'A fondness for suffering' was Bruno Walter's exasperated final verdict, after years of wranglings and patched-up friendships. 'To Alma, the personality' was the best that Thomas Mann could manage on her 69th birthday, having forgiven her for engineering a rift with Schoenberg over the 12-tone system partially outlined in *Doctor Faustus*.

Haste approaches her subject not as a musicologist but as a storyteller, in book and film, with profiles of Clarissa Eden

and the Churchills to her credit. Drawing liberally on Alma's diaries and letters, all scrupulously cited, and taking a judiciously sideways look at her notoriously unreliable memoir, she lets Alma speak for herself, and refrains from casting judgement with almost saintly restraint. The pages turn rapidly, with a director's eye for the telling glance. But what of the incidents retold by Haste, ventriloquising Alma? Did she really live on a diet of lettuce and buttermilk at a spa while Mahler was writing the Tenth? And even if she did, was she 'prescribed dancing' to lift her spirits? And when, three days into her stay, she met and immediately began an affair with Walter Gropius, is it sufficient to observe that 'As always, Alma was drawn to creative talent'?

At such points some guidance would be welcome. We are left to decide for ourselves how monstrous was Alma's

solipsism in refusing to attend the funerals of her husbands, or even of her children, and Haste takes a well-aimed shot at Elias Canetti, no less, for his tear-jerking fantasy of Alma weeping at the graveside of Manon Gropius. Nevertheless, the small gallery of photos is not required to explain how Vienna's creative men fell for her, one after another. Perhaps Josef Labor gave her composition lessons for six years only because he was blind. 'I still see her before me,' remembered Walter, years later, 'daubs of clay on her hands and her sculptor's smock, her faced flushed with the tension of her work – and very beautiful.'

Alma's talents in this direction go unexplored by Haste, who pleads a case for her as an unfulfilled composer that the surviving Lieder hardly bear out. To conclude that this three-quarters of an hour of sub-Wagnerian effusion constitutes her 'lasting, and living, legacy' is to do her a paradoxical injustice. Alma herself knew that she lived on through the works she inspired – just as often provoked – by her lovers. Furious with Walter for not according her the prominence she deserved in his monograph on Mahler, she took comfort in the printing of the Tenth Symphony's sketches: 'There is no way these old opponents of mine can get over this: "To live for you, to die for you – Almschi!"' Mahler scrawled that over the single most dissonant and agonised chord in his entire output. To claim it as a mark of affection displays either naiveté or disingenuousness to a fantastic degree. With Alma it's often hard to tell which, and Haste is not the historian to take a view.

At such times there is no substitute for a degree of intimacy with the music. Siegfried and Siegmund are mixed up, Weingartner goes unrecognised. The index doesn't help: look up *Parsifal* and you find only her visit to Bayreuth, whereas Haste also has a good story about Gustav and Alma in New York, invited to the private residence of the jeweller Tiffany, designed as if after Klingsor's garden, to judge from Alma's description, topped off by an organist playing the Prelude. It clearly left an impression. A friend of a friend once paid a visit to Alma at her New York apartment in the early 1960s. He remembered the thick carpets, the heavy drapery and low lighting of the salon where she held court and lived out her declining years, which by then were declining very fast indeed. He was received with the invitation, more like an instruction, to join her in caviar and champagne – at 8 o'clock in the morning. Having said his goodbyes, he threw up on the sidewalk. **Peter Quantrill**

THE GRAMOPHONE COLLECTION

Beethoven's 'Hammerklavier' Sonata

Jed Distler assesses nine decades' worth of recordings of Beethoven's mightiest piano sonata

Beethoven affixed the inscription 'für das Hammerklavier' to his last five piano sonatas, referring to Broadwood's new and improved model instrument, which the British company had sent to the composer as a gift. As it happened, the 'Hammerklavier' sobriquet became most closely linked to the Sonata in B flat, Op 106. Certainly this nickname has a formidable ring to it, and reflects the unprecedented dimensions and challenges presented in this largest and arguably most difficult of Beethoven's 32 piano sonatas.

Beethoven worked on the sonata between 1817 and 1818, at the cusp of a personally difficult and creatively fallow period. From the very first bar one senses a liberation of Beethoven's pent-up energy as the ideas leap off the pages, bursting at the seams and testing the limits of two mortal hands. Surely the *Hammerklavier's* earliest print editions must have scared off consumers accustomed to Beethoven's earlier, relatively playable sonatas. In 1835 an article in the French music journal *Le Pianiste* simply dismissed the sonata as 'impenetrable'. However, the following year, Hector Berlioz praised Franz Liszt for giving 'the ideal performance of a work with the reputation of being unperformable'. It is performable, of course, yet still daunts pianists in regard to its keyboard layout, its unprecedented time-scale and its seemingly paradoxical fusion of improvisational momentum and structural rigour.

Several textual controversies continue to raise questions. In the rising chain of broken fifths and sixths between hands just before the first-movement recapitulation (bars 224-26), the lower-note up-beat should logically read A natural, while

the stranger-sounding A sharp is merely a printed error that Beethoven overlooked. Still, Donald Francis Tovey called the misprint 'a stroke of genius' (an asterisk indicates my discography's A sharp observers). Then there are Beethoven's metronome indications. Certain pianists claim the outer movements' markings as optimistic to a fault. In a well-known video talk, Alfred Brendel commences the opening *Allegro* to the accompaniment of a metronome ticking away at Beethoven's prescribed $\text{minim}=138$. After a few bars Brendel stops and disparages that tempo as akin to 'silent movie music'.

Yet there have been pianists who match or approximate Beethoven's headlong directives and manage to convey a terse, forward-moving, combative and quintessentially Beethovenian sound world that thrills and exhilarates. At the same time, interpreters who favour broader tempos can potentially impart an expansive gravitas and majesty befitting the music's intricate details and grand design. Others achieve convincing results by splitting the difference between the two poles. My overview of Op 106 on disc judiciously attempts to consider all these options in the process of evaluating a number of notable interpretations.

Liszt's pupil Frederic Lamond was apparently the first to attempt a *Hammerklavier* studio recording but no traces remain from the sessions. Another Liszt pupil, the conductor Felix Weingartner, recorded his own orchestration in 1930, a project akin to conquering Mount Everest by helicopter (the Royal Philharmonic brass and woodwinds could have used spare oxygen tanks!). The Op 106 discography truly

begins with **Artur Schnabel**, the first pianist to record all 32 sonatas. Schnabel launches into the first-movement *Allegro* and the fourth movement's gnarly fugal finale with startling ferocity and brio. Throwing caution to the wind, Schnabel's brain sometimes outruns his fingers, yet the bobbles are less consequential than received opinion claims. Paradoxically, Schnabel brings varied inflections and rhythmic spring to the Scherzo's dotted-rhythm motif by holding back the basic tempo. Schnabel's *Adagio sostenuto* has never been surpassed on record: once past the muted, understated opening statement, the phrases unfold like a Shakespearean monologue intoned by a great actor who understands pacing, who knows which words to emphasise, what sentences to toss away and where the pauses, commas and full stops fall. Schnabel's left-hand accompaniment is not just a backdrop but an anchoring, stabilising point of reference.

Of the two 1936 contenders, Louis Kentner's alternately stodgy and Chopinesque traversal holds less interest than **Wilhelm Kempff's** honest musicianship and lack of artifice. The German pianist conceives the music on a more intimate, less cosmic scale than Schnabel, yet with a comparable linear awareness that would become more clipped and caustic by the time of his 1951 remake. Kempff's 1964 stereo version captures the shellac edition's more pronounced dynamic contrasts and the mono LP's delicate tracery. That said, I feel that Kempff misses the point in his impatient handling of the fourth movement's introductory *Largo*: shouldn't the music unfold as if one is waking from a dream, trying to establish orientation?

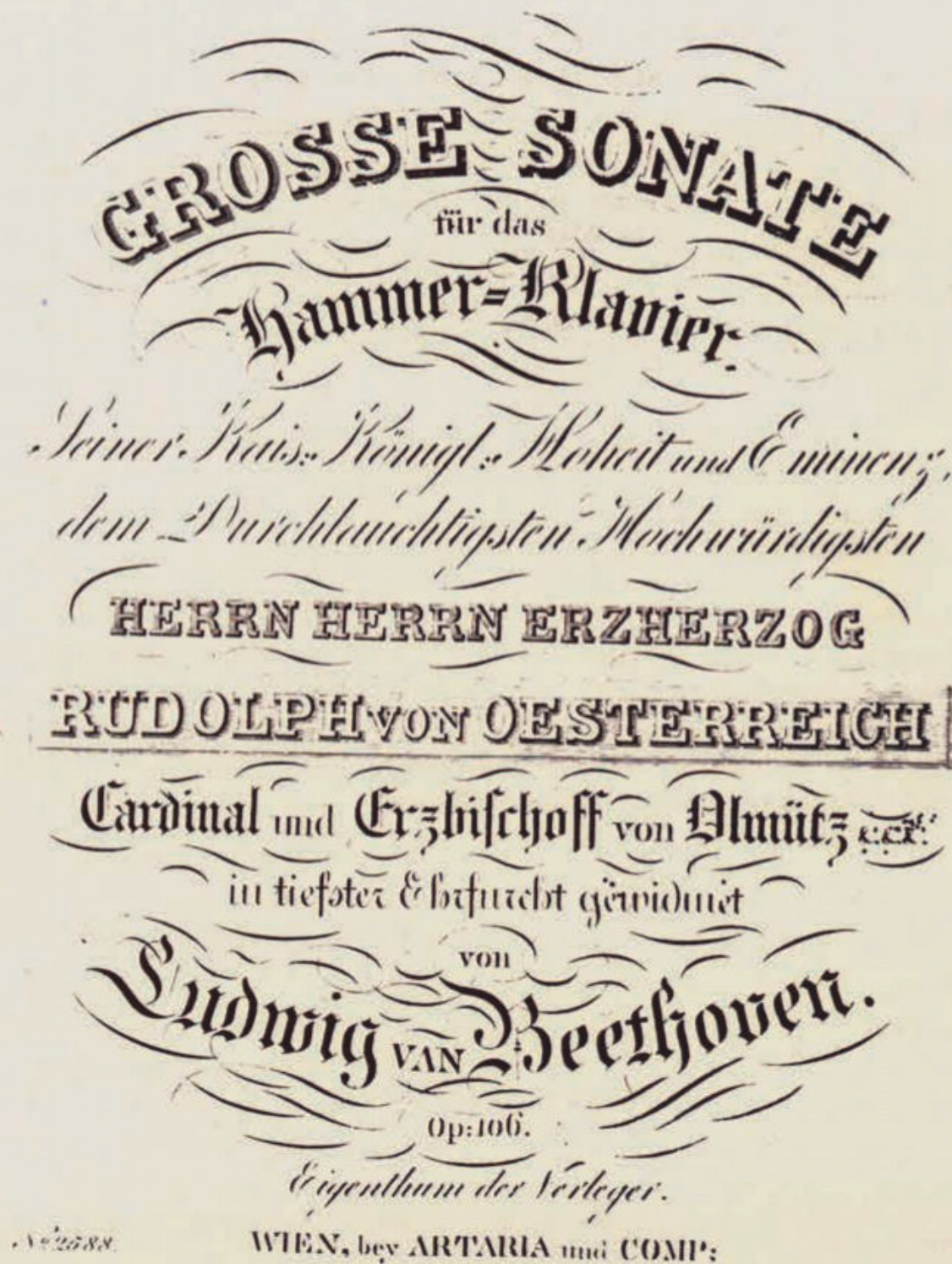
No Kempff version, by the way, includes the first-movement exposition repeat.

The advent of LP brought forth a sizeable yet uneven Op 106 bumper crop. These include the forthright and thoughtful Mieczysław Horszowski, the tensionless and stolid Wilhelm Backhaus (he did better in concert), the eccentric and rough-hewn Maria Yudina, the shaggy yet energetic Yves Nat, the probing yet sectionalised Ernst Levy and the unsettled Eduardo del Pueyo, plus two studio versions from the sober, plain-speaking Egon Petri.

Friedrich Gulda's 1951 Decca version finds the 21-year-old hotshot matching Schnabel's brashness in the outer movements, yet comparably neutral in the *Adagio*. **Solomon** the following year achieves a triumphant mesh of power and suavity. His *Adagio* eschews Schnabel's raw-nerve yearning for dignified reserve and meditative breadth, while still generating comparable note-to-note tension.

Claudio Arrau's 1954 American Decca recording (not issued until 2011) rivals Solomon for breadth and technical finish but its seemingly contradictory fusion of textual rectitude and unabashed rhetoric would gain further depth, power, harmonic probity and finesse in Arrau's 1963 standard-setting stereo Philips release, 'probably the most discomfiting interpretation to have been set down on record', according to David Fanning's October 1988 Op 106 overview in these pages.

The teenage **Daniel Barenboim's** late-'50s Westminster recording reveals a more direct and matter-of-fact interpreter than his extrovert, looser-limbed and



A work of unprecedented dimensions and challenges: the first edition of Beethoven's Hammerklavier Sonata

slower 28-year-old counterpart circa 1970 (an interim 1964 version released by the American Command label awaits official digitising). His style is very much in the Arrau mould; and if the pianism falls short of the older master's finish and sophistication, one cannot question Barenboim's sincerity and commitment. The early-1980s DG studio recording easily tops Barenboim's commercial audio

and video *Hammerklaviers* for musical discipline and sonic superiority.

Not all younger pianists follow Arrau's lead insofar as embracing rhetorical risks and rewards. **Dina Ugoorskaja**, however, embarks on a large-scale journey characterised by forceful accents, broad brushstrokes, marked dynamic contrasts and the ability to follow melodic strands and counterlines through to their final



A triumphant mesh of suavity and power: Solomon raised the bar with his 1952 recording

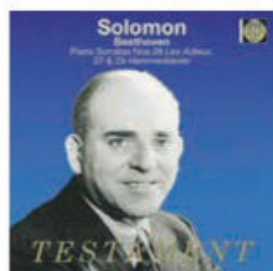
destinations. At first I found the pianist's italicisations fanciful, yet several hearings led me to conclude that they stem from her constant emotional and intellectual engagement with the material at hand.

Some pundits took **Alfred Brendel** to task for reinforcing bass lines with octave doublings in the first-movement repeat, as did his one-time protégé Paul Lewis (the same critics, of course – don't mention Éric Heidsieck's more garish textual transgressions!). Be that as it may, Brendel's interpretations deepened over time. My Brendelian preference veers towards his live 1983 Queen Elizabeth Hall recording, where tempos are more animated and flowing, with a wider breadth of inflection and tone colour. The Scherzo's zany upward scale pulls a bigger punch and the *Adagio sostenuto*'s long melodic arabesques sing with greater intensity, while the outer movements acquire newfound urgency in tandem with conscientious voice-leading.

THE HISTORIC CHOICE

Solomon Testament © SBT1191

Solomon's 1952 recording raised the bar for this work, setting new standards that his older contemporaries were hard-pressed to match. Solomon's mindful virtuosity and controlled refinement enable him to



reveal Beethoven's wide range of emotions with a combination of suavity and power that draws attention to the music first and the pianist second.

In many respects Brendel's uncompromising outlook and hard-won mastery parallels **Rudolf Serkin**. Interestingly, these pianists shared two traits with their polar opposite, Vladimir Horowitz: each possessed a difficult-to-record sonority, and each understood how to project their sonority for maximum definition and impact in a concert hall, even when playing softly. Although the tight microphone placement and relatively airless ambience of Serkin's studio *Hammerklavier* lacks the luminosity and sustaining quality of his out-of-print 1968 Royal Festival Hall performance (BBC Legends, 11/08), Serkin painstakingly pays heed to Beethoven's every dot, slur and accent without an iota of varnish or artifice. One can imagine the hours of drudgery that went into perfecting the fugue's flawlessly matched trills to Serkin's exacting standards.

While Peter Serkin shares his father's fierce commitment, nervous energy and instantly identifiable pianism, his

THE ARCHITECT

Murray Perahia DG © 479 8353GH

Although one suspects that considerable scholarship, analysis and architectural inquiry inform Perahia's conception (not to mention plenty of piano practice), there's not one pedantic bone in this



performance's body. Perahia achieves a fluid fusion of the personal and the universal that add up to a most gratifying listening experience.

fleet, jazzy, playful and utterly effortless fingerwork couldn't be more different. In 1983 he recorded the sonata on an unlovely-sounding Graf fortepiano that doesn't hold its tuning (for alternatives featuring more attractive period instruments, check out Paul Badura-Skoda, Andrew Willis and Ronald Brautigam). A few years later Serkin re-recorded the work on a Steinway grand. This extraordinary performance takes wing like no other *Hammerklavier* on disc, and makes most pianists sound thick by comparison. A pity that it's long been out of print.

Two stylistically antipodal DG releases that won respective *Gramophone* Awards warrant re-evaluation. For pianists who came of age in the 20th century's last three decades, **Maurizio Pollini**'s gauntly penetrating sonority, firmly delineated fingerwork and unflappable demeanour stood as the Op 106 gold standard. Naturally they overlooked Vladimir Ashkenazy's comparable high craft and unshakable poise, but that's another story. I can't share my colleagues' enthusiasm for **Emil Gilels**'s rendition, although one must acknowledge the Russian virtuoso's forthright, steel-trap rhythm and powerful articulation, which command attention: listen to how the treacherous leaps in the first movement and fugal finale land smack in the centre of the keys. Yet I'm frustrated by Gilels's provincial ritardandos, his clipped, tight-fisted phrasing and his overly stark *Adagio sostenuto*. DG's early digital production conveys a metallic glare in louder passages that remastering never managed to tame. Interestingly, a comparably expansive and far less accurate live 1984 Gilels *Hammerklavier* performance issued by BMG/Melodiya conveys 20 times the force and cumulative sweep.

Gilels's arch-rival **Sviatoslav Richter** briefly brought Op 106 into his mammoth repertoire on at least seven occasions in 1975, three of which were released on CD. The readings differ in small details but are conceptually similar. The June 18 Royal

THE BARD

Dina Ugorskaja AVI-Music © AVI8553256

Ugorskaja doesn't interpret the *Hammerklavier* so much as inhabit it. Her mastery is undoubtedly informed by meticulous preparation, yet one is constantly caught off-guard by gestures, turns of phrase



and guiding accents that sound spontaneous and illuminating at the same time. Her recent death at 46 from cancer was a tremendous loss for music.

Festival Hall performance is more fluid and settled than the one from Prague on June 2 (Praga Digitals, 6/96), though I prefer the warmer-hued June 11 Aldeburgh version. I have found Richter's interpretation less interesting and more aloof over time; and for all his brilliant control of the fugue, the basic tempo slows slightly as the music progresses.

But that's true for many pianists, including Stephen Kovacevich, Earl Wild and the young **HJ Lim**, who, at 24, marked her catalogue debut by unleashing a whole Beethoven cycle upon an unsuspecting public. Many critics considered Lim talented but green. Her attempt to shoehorn the *Adagio*'s intricately wrought *cantabiles* within a rigidly held and uncomfortably fast framework tells the tale. But give me Lim's loosey-goosey, devil-may-care attitude in the outer movements over the laboriously polished and musically ponderous Grigory Sokolov any day!

Better still, give me **Mitsuko Uchida**'s seasoned artistry. Her first movement abounds with polyphonic acumen, helped by one of the most potent left hands in the business. Uchida's emphasis of the repeated notes and multi-hued voicings enhances the Trio's enigmatic aura, although she underplays the climactic scales and laughing tremolo chords. Her *Adagio sostenuto* counts among the most expansive and cohesive readings on disc: the judiciously proportioned rubatos never get bogged down, the elaborately lyrical phrases peak and ebb naturally and the stark, exposed sections are meticulously calibrated and timed for maximum eloquence. Uchida doesn't allow the trills leading out of the *Largo* into the fugue their transitional due (they sound tacked-on, rather than emerging from what came before), and her slowing down of the basic tempo for the fugue's lyrical D major theme in crotchets labours the obvious mood change. I also contend that Uchida's ritardando on the penultimate pair of chords undermines the final cadence's decisive last word. Quibbles aside, though, you cannot help but respect Uchida's insight, concentration and sheer finger power.

If Uchida occasionally betrays signs of pre-planning, **Annie Fischer**'s rock-solid overview easily absorbs moments of unstudied flexibility: the dabs of rubato in the first-movement recapitulation; the Scherzo's rhythmic inflections; the slow movement's heart-ripping crescendos; the variedly expressive trills in the fugue. Evidently Fischer recorded all of the sonatas in 1977-78, then spent the next 15 years in a state of indecision, alternately approving and rejecting takes, recording



Constant emotional and intellectual engagement: the late Dina Ugorskaja

and re-recording inserts and probably driving her producers crazy. After Fischer's death in 1995, Hungaraton patched the cycle together. All things considered, her *Hammerklavier* miraculously coheres.

mannered. He dots all the Is and crosses all the Ts in the fugal finale at the expense of forward momentum. But such compulsive detailing illuminates the Scherzo's deliberate arrhythmia. The easy ebb and flow of Schiff's

András Schiff openly cites Fischer's influence, although his scholarly, self-aware musicianship couldn't be more different. Imagine a fortepiano's clipped, biting quality of note attack, acute timbral distinctions between registers and the widely varying resonances available from the sustain pedal. Fortify these attributes with the modern grand's lung power and projection, and you've got the essence of Schiff's Op 106. His fondness for the breaking of hands sometimes magnifies felicities of voice-leading or expression, yet at other times it comes off as arch and

SELECTED DISCOGRAPHY

DATE / ARTISTS	RECORD COMPANY (REVIEW DATE)
1935 Artur Schnabel *	EMI/Warner (S) (B) 265064-2 (8/09); (S) (B) 9029 59750-5 (12/16)
1951 Friedrich Gulda	Decca (B) (11) (D) 475 6835DC11 (1/52 ^R , 9/05)
1952 Solomon *	Testament (F) SBT1191 (9/56 ^R , 11/00)
1963 Claudio Arrau *	Philips (M) (2) 468 912-2PM2; (S) (80 discs) 483 2984 (3/65 ^R , 6/18)
1964 Wilhelm Kempff	DG (S) (B) 477 7958GB8; (M) 478 5695 (12/66 ^R)
1969/70 Rudolf Serkin	Sony Classical (S) (11) 88691 98830-2 (3/72 ^R)
1975 Sviatoslav Richter *	ICA Classics (F) ICAC5084 (5/13)
1977 Maurizio Pollini *	DG (B) (2) 449 740-2GOR2 (1/78 ^R)
1977/78 Annie Fischer	Hungaroton (M) (D) HCD31629
1983 Alfred Brendel	Philips (M) (D) 412 723-2PH (4/86)
1983 Emil Gilels *	DG (M) 463 639-2GOR (12/83 ^R , 2/84 ^R)
1984 Daniel Barenboim	DG (S) (9) 0289 463 127-2GB9 (1/85 ^R , 7/85 ^R)
2007 Mitsuko Uchida *	Philips (M) (D) 475 8662PM (1/08)
2008 András Schiff *	ECM New Series (F) 476 6189; (S) (11) 481 2908
2010 Stewart Goodyear	Marquis (M) (2) MAR507 (A/11 ^{U5}); (S) (10) MAR513
2012 Dina Ugorskaja *	AVI-Music (F) AVI8553256
2012 HJ Lim *	EMI/Warner Classics (B) (2) (D) 730009-2 (5/12); (S) (B) 464952-2 (9/12)
2014 Alessio Bax *	Signum (F) SIGCD397 (11/14)
2013 Igor Levit *	Sony Classical (M) (2) 88883 74735-2 (11/13); 19075 84318-2 (A/19)
2016 Steven Osborne	Hyperion (F) CDA68073 (10/16)
2016 Murray Perahia	DG (F) 479 8353GH (3/18)
2018 Martino Tirimo *	Hänssler Classic (S) (16) HC19032 (12/19)

*observes A sharp in bars 224-26

BEETHOVEN SYMPHONIES

Philippe Jordan's acclaimed Beethoven-cycle on 5 CDs.

AVAILABLE NOW



“Beethoven
of the highest
order”
Gramophone

wienersymphoniker.at

WIENER  SYMPHONIKER

CHETHAM'S INTERNATIONAL PIANO SUMMER SCHOOL 2020



Artistic Director:
Murray McLachlan

The friendliest piano summer school in the world!



NEW FOR 2020 – Junior Piano Academy 8–13 August 2020

A new exciting addition to CIPSS, the Junior Piano Academy is in four sections and is only open to under 18s.

14–20 August 2020 | **CIPSS Part 1**
20–26 August 2020 | **CIPSS Part 2**

Choose from over 12 different courses – open to all (under 18s must be accompanied by a parent/guardian at all times)

Faculty to include: Dmitri Alexeev, Peter Donohoe, Christopher Elton, Margaret Fingerhut, Norma Fisher, Philip Fowke, Peter Frankl, Grigory Gruzman, John Lenehan, Joanna MacGregor, Wolfgang Manz, Noriko Ogawa, Ronan O'Hora, Steven Osborne, Pascal Nemirovski, Jason Rebello, Martin Roscoe, Graham Scott, Craig Sheppard, Martino Tirimo

Booking opens 10 January 2020

www.pianosummerschool.com

54th International Vocal Competition Opera | Oratorio 's-Hertogenbosch Netherlands 28 Nov - 6 Dec 2020



Jury

Pål Christian Moe | Jury President
Deborah Polaski
Vesselina Kasarova

Hein Mulders | Intendant Oper, Philharmonie, Essener Philharmoniker
Rosemary Joshua & Damia Carbonell | Dutch National Opera
Et al.

Preliminary Rounds

Amsterdam, 's-Hertogenbosch, Łódź, Luxembourg, Ningbo
Auditions also via YouTube

More than €40,000 prize money
plus engagements

ivc.nu



The most discomfiting interpretation on record? Claudio Arrau 'projects Beethoven's big picture'

intimately scaled *Adagio sostenuto* belies its relatively short playing time, which is not the case for **Stewart Goodyear**'s equally beautiful yet somewhat impatient traversal. But the three other movements come to sparkling life through Goodyear's supreme technique, flair for drama and sheer joy in music-making.

Joy is the operative word concerning **Steven Osborne**'s Op 106. His recording understandably elicited superlatives from my colleague Patrick Rucker, who described Osborne's finale as 'a febrile paroxysm that synergises the impetus of the first two movements, seen through a refracting prism of fugal logic and organ-like sonorities. The result is a virtuoso apotheosis as brilliant as molten iron from a blast furnace.'

Alessio Bax's *Hammerklavier* (coupled with the *Moonlight* Sonata) is nearly on that level. His first movement stands out for an amazingly well-contoured fughetta, where structure and kinetic energy happily fuse; and what a build-up into the recapitulation (complete with A sharps)! The Scherzo's upward F major scale will knock over unsuspecting listeners. As for the fugue, it's brisk, clean as a whistle and as jazzy as Peter Serkin's – well, almost. If Bax's *Adagio sostenuto* convinces less, it's due to his tendency to underplay the slow-moving left-hand chords while the right-hand melodies don't budge from centre stage.

Murray Perahia's *Hammerklavier/Moonlight* coupling, however, represents unalloyed greatness on every level. He leaves no small detail unconsidered, yet conveys tremendous vibrancy, forward motion and

controlled freedom. What's more, Perahia's sophisticated balancing of contrapuntal textures and harmonic pointing never sounds the least bit forced or contrived, while his 69-year-old fingers operate unambiguously at full capacity insofar as speed, accuracy, suppleness and flexibility are concerned. The first movement's lyrical cadences fall easily on the ear as they prepare you for what's up ahead, while the fughetta's driving momentum is tempered by Perahia's care over scaling the dynamics. He accounts for every note in the Scherzo's sprung chords and clarifies the Trio's cross-rhythmic antics purely through colour and touch. Strong left-hand underpinning and exemplary voice-leading provide an emotional foil to the *Adagio sostenuto*'s elaborate right-hand *cantabiles*. While many pianists pedal through the fourth-movement introduction's rests, Perahia trusts Beethoven's silences, yet dramatises them by colouring the surrounding notes with the utmost specificity. He sustains the notorious fugal finale with subtle characterisations, such as his holding back ever so slightly when the theme first appears in retrograde, or the strong linear contouring throughout the lyrical D major section. In concert Perahia's unsubtle accelerating just before the final bars bothered me; happily he doesn't do so here!

As much as I bow to **Igor Levit**'s stunning proficiency, flawless execution and inborn affinity for the idiom, the staggering suavity he brings to the fugue now seems a tad slick and generalised when measured alongside the chiaroscuro of Perahia's

polyphonic palette. **Martino Tirimo** is less colourful than Perahia, yet equally cognisant of how Beethoven's lines behave both in harmony and in conflict. His left hand often takes the lead, as you'll hear from many highlighted up-beats. Because Tirimo does not wear the *Adagio sostenuto*'s heartbreak on his sleeve, it takes several hearings to appreciate the exactitude and intention behind his nuanced subtlety.

No doubt collectors with long memories will notice my survey's omission of many fascinating and praiseworthy contenders: Charles Rosen, Rudolf Buchbinder, Peter Takács, Claude Frank, Robert Benz, David Allen Wehr and Georg Friedrich Schenck – seasoned Beethovenians one and all. For two out-of-print extremes, try Andrea Lucchesini's ripely Romantic EMI version (11/87) or, from the obscure American Dover label, Beveridge Webster's bracingly Schnabelesque account. I value unique live documents by Howard Karp, Webster Aitken and Mindru Katz. Visit YouTube to hear Frederic Rzewski audaciously supplant the text with improvisation (his longtime musical associate Ursula Oppens proves equally fearless but sticks to Beethoven's notes!). I suspect that old age as much as weathered experience factors into the late Sequeira Costa's glacial conception, whereas Rita Bouboulidi's similar pacing frankly depicts an uphill battle.

A work of such infinite dimension and detail precludes the notion of a perfect or definitive recording. Yet in their divergent ways, Solomon, Dina Ugorskaja, Murray Perahia and, in particular, Claudio Arrau offer profound and illuminating experiences which reveal new layers of subtlety and insight with successive hearings. In this august company one must include, too, Artur Schnabel's incomparable slow movement. And if you locate a copy of Peter Serkin's aforementioned Pro Arte release on a modern Steinway, hold on to it for dear life. **G**

THE TOP CHOICE

Claudio Arrau Philips **Ⓜ** ② 468 912-2PM2
The 1963 Philips studio sound gorgeously captures Arrau's full-throated sonority. More significantly, Arrau channels his scrupulous pianism towards projecting Beethoven's big picture without skimming over the slightest detail, and he's not afraid



to embrace the music's Jovian struggle and triumph. Arrau resists casual listening; you have to work with him, yet the rewards are life-lasting.

PERFORMANCES & EVENTS

Presenting live concert and opera performances from around the world and reviews of archived music-making available online to stream where you want, when you want

Elbphilharmonie, Hamburg & online

January 4 & 18

The first of the Elbphilharmonie's live streams this month is not what you'd call an obvious *Gramophone* choice, but it's here regardless because we think it sounds pretty fantastic: a classical-meets-pop collaboration between **Kristjan Järvi** and the Baltic Sea Philharmonic, and the major British band **Bastille**, with support from **Allie Sherlock** and **Madilyn Bailey**. However, if that doesn't float your boat then look instead to the second date, which finds **Christoph von Dohnányi** leading the NDR Elbphilharmonie Orchester in Ives's *The Unanswered Question*, Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 6 and Ligeti's Concerto for Flute and Oboe, for which the soloists are respectively **Luc Mangholz** and **Kalev Kuljus**. elbphilharmonie.de

GSO Play (free to view)

January 6 & 11

There aren't any concerts streamed live from Gothenburg this month. However GSO Play is instead making available two of its big-name November concerts: first, the November 23 visit of **Nemanja Radulović**, when he joined **Sanntu-Matias Rouvali** and the Gothenburg Symphony Orchestra for Aram Khachaturian's Violin Concerto paired with Khachaturian's Suite from *Masquerade* and Sibelius's Symphony No 4; and the orchestra's November 10 concert, with **Leif Ove Andsnes** the soloist in Mozart's Piano Concerto No 22, paired with Bruckner's Symphony No 9. gso.se

Philharmonie, Berlin & Digital Concert Hall

January 11, 18 & 25

It's a rich offering from the Berlin Philharmonic this month. **Kirill Petrenko** and the orchestra are joined by **Daniel Barenboim** for Beethoven's Piano Concerto No 3, paired with Suk's Symphony No 2 (Jan 11). Next Petrenko steps aside for **Herbert Blomstedt** to conduct the orchestra in Mozart's Piano Concerto No 2 with **Leif Ove Andsnes** and Bruckner's Symphony No 4 (Jan 18), before Petrenko's back again for a one-work programme of Mahler's Symphony No 6 (Jan 25). digitalconcerthall.com

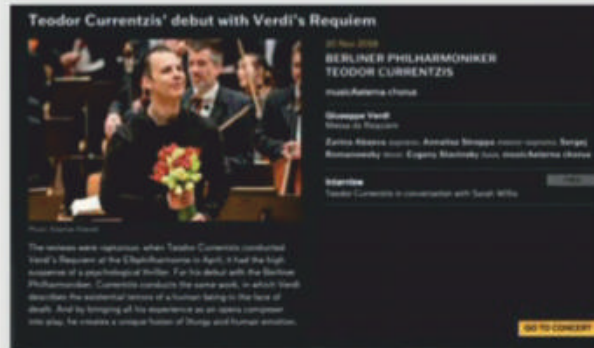
Metropolitan Opera, New York & cinemas worldwide

January 11

This month's live cinema transmission from the New York Met is a new production of

ARCHIVE CONCERT REVIEW

Teodor Currentzis makes his Berlin Phil debut with Verdi's Requiem



Verdi

A few days after impressing New Yorkers with musicAeterna and his second Verdi Requiem tour of the year (see the June issue for the climax of the first, in Milan), Teodor Currentzis made a much-awaited debut with the Berlin Philharmonic in the same work. Berlin has stood back and watched the Currentzis bandwagon roll on, but there's every sign from the commitment and intensity of their playing that here is a conductor they are prepared to take seriously.

Currentzis eliminated a few tricky variables from the occasion by importing his choir and most of 'his' soloists from Perm – but fate intervened with the last-minute withdrawal of the mezzo-soprano Clémentine Margaine. Her replacement was Annalisa Stroppa, who almost stole the headlines from the conductor with the dignified assurance of her solo in the

'Lux aeterna' and beautifully matched 'Recordare' partnership with the soprano Zarina Abaeva.

Currentzis, meanwhile, continues to wring pathos from every corner of the work like only a few select maestros of the past, pushing his forces to extremes of light and dark, loud and soft, though rarely slow or especially quick: he's a more mainstream interpreter than the hype gives him credit for. The climaxes of the 'Rex tremendae' and 'Lacrymosa' are unerringly paced and shattering in their effect, perhaps even more so with a full-strength Berlin bass section at their core.

Even more affecting in their way are the conversational intimacy of both voices and carefully coached instrumentalists in the Requiem's many points of repose and quiet prayer, especially the *Offertorio* and the exhausted close of the 'Libera me', where the conductor draws on the drama of the occasion and holds back the inevitable ovation for a full minute of silence.

Peter Quantrill

Available via various subscription packages to the Digital Concert Hall, from seven days (€9.90) or one month (€14.90) to 12 months (€149), at digitalconcerthall.com

Berg's *Wozzeck* by the South African artist William Kentridge, following on from his 2015 production for the company of Berg's other operatic masterpiece, *Lulu*. Set in an apocalyptic pre-First World War environment, *Wozzeck* features **Peter Mattei** making his role debut in the title role, joined by **Elza van den Heever** as Marie, **Christopher Ventris** as the Drum-Major, **Christian Van Horn** as the Doctor, and **Gerhard Siegel** as the Captain. Met Music Director **Yannick Nézet-Séguin** conducts. metopera.org/season/in-cinemas

Wiener Konzerthaus, Vienna & Takt1

January 16

This Vienna concert is a nice opportunity to see **Paavo Järvi** in his new partnership with Zurich's Tonhalle Orchestra as their newly installed Chief Conductor. Beyond that, it'll also give an advance flavour of the Tchaikovsky symphony cycle they're currently recording, because this

programme's centrepiece is Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 5. Preceding the symphony are Bartók's Dance Suite and Copland's Clarinet Concerto with **Martin Fröst**. takt1.com

Rose Studio, Lincoln Center, New York & online (free to view)

January 16

This season the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center is presenting a series of New Milestones concerts, looking at works from the past century that have set the stage for the composers of today. This particular one is titled **Electronic Chamber Music in New Form: Stockhausen's Kontakte** and explores how Stockhausen's creation of musical dialogue between electronic and instrumental sounds paved the way for the continued exploration of electronic music. Unsurprisingly *Kontakte* itself opens the programme – composed in 1960 for piano, percussion and

electronic sounds – after which come Kaija Saariaho's 1994 *Trois rivières* for Percussion Quartet and Electronics, and Thomas Meadowcroft's 2013 *Cradles* for Percussion Duo with Wurlizer e-Piano. **Michael Brown** is the pianist, the percussionists are **Christopher Froh, Ayano Kataoka, Eduardo Leandro** and **Ian David Rosenbaum**, while **David Adamcyk** is on electronics.

chambermusicsociety.org/watch-and-listen

Concertgebouw, Amsterdam & online (free to view)

January 19

Elim Chan conducts the Netherlands Philharmonic in an all-Russian programme for this month's Sunday morning live stream from the Amsterdam Concertgebouw. Tchaikovsky's Symphony No 5 is preceded by a couple of Dvořák's works for cello and orchestra, the Rondo in G and *Silent Woods*, performed by the 2018 winner of Amsterdam's Cello Biennale, **Eline Hensels**.

concertgebouw.nl

Teatro Goldoni, Livorno & online (free to view)

January 21-26

With a junior category as well as a main one, the **Livorno Piano Competition** is one of the smaller competitions, but never forget that it's with these sorts of contests that those destined to win the majors will first test the waters. Catch the final round and prize-giving ceremony streamed live on the competition's YouTube page, and it's worth also pointing out that despite the competition's modest size and

profile, the picture and sound quality of their video footage is good.

livornopianocompetition.com;
youtube.com/watch?v=ULRHdyHr5Eo

Orchestra Hall, Detroit (free to view)

January 25

Paganini's First Violin Concerto doesn't get as many airings on the concert platform as it probably should, and especially not with mature artists. So it's good news to see **Augustin Hadelich** bringing it to Detroit this month, and all the more so in the context of his having already released Paganini's 24 Caprices on Warner Classics (2/18). Conducting Hadelich and the Detroit Symphony Orchestra is **Jader Bignamini**, and the Paganini is preceded in the first half by Berlioz's *Symphonie fantastique*.

dso.org

Komische Oper Berlin & Operavision

January 25

If there's one opera we suggest you catch this month then it's Operavision's live stream of the opening night of Barrie Kosky's brand new production for the Komische Oper Berlin, of the Weimar Republic's last operetta: Jaromír Weinberger's *Frühlingsstürme* ('Spring Storms'), whose January 1933 premiere at Berlin's Admiralspalast took place 10 days before the National Socialists seized power. This new production marks the first time it has been staged since it closed in March 1933, and features an entirely reconstructed score, the original manuscript having gone missing. It's an intriguing proposition too. Set in the middle

of the Japanese-Russian war of 1904-05, it's a comedy featuring Japanese spies disguised as Chinese in the headquarters of the Russian army command, and with amorous intrigues aplenty. Musically you can expect night music, musical exoticism, and lyrical melodies. As for the scoring, it breaks with operetta tradition with the chorus only singing offstage, the finales being taken on by the four soloists alone, and the role of General Wladimir Katschalow being entirely spoken. **Jordan de Souza** conducts, and his cast features **Stefan Kurt** as the General, **Alma Sadé** as Tatjana, **Vera-Lotte Boecker** as Lydia Pawlowska, **Dominik Köninger** as Roderich Zirbitz and **Tanel Akzeybek** as ITO.

komische-oper-berlin.de; operavision.eu

Boca Raton, Florida & online (free to view)

January 25 & 26

Hosted by the Boca Raton campus of Florida's Lynn University Conservatory of Music, the Elmar Oliveira International Violin Competition is only the second competition of its kind in the US dedicated solely to the violin, and is open to players aged between 16 and 32. Interesting repertoire for 2020 includes a new commission from EOIVC Composer-in-Residence **Christopher Theofanidis**. The jury, meanwhile, includes **Mihaela Martin** and **Sung-Ju Lee**, chaired by **David Cerone**, and they're awarding prizes including a cash First of \$30,000. Catch the finals both on the EOIVC Facebook page and its YouTube channel.

elmaroliveiraivc.org; facebook.com/elmaroliveiraivc/; youtube.com/channel/UCuYhHhBoADbtY80zdYAPtQ

ARCHIVE OPERA REVIEW

Rossini's 1819 opera Ermione returns to the theatre where it was first heard, Naples's Teatro di San Carlo



Rossini

The Trojan War must be the most prolific of our great myths in its spawning of prequels and sequels being set to music. Rossini, in a surprise failure at its 1819 premiere, took over a tale from Racine which brought two leading Trojan women into post-war captivity in the kingdom of

Achilles's son Pirro. Andromaca, Hector's widow, is with her young son Astyanax, an important political pawn. Ermione, daughter of Helen and Menelaus, was to marry Pirro but he has fallen in love with Andromaca. Into this tense stand-off comes

Oreste, Agamemnon's son, demanding Astyanax on behalf of the kings of Greece. But Oreste is also in love with Ermione ...

The confrontations made superb vocal drama for Rossini at a midway stage between his famous earlier comedies and the serious opera for Paris. Naples's anniversary production (Jacopo Spirei) is

quite straightforward as pure theatre to look at. Updated costume-wise to the time of its premiere (but Pirro has a flashy modern suit) it lives in a world of flown palace walls and ceremonial daïses. There's a mite too much in-view furniture shifting but it does prepare for a dramatic final tableau in which Pirro's murder by Oreste has become an *Elektra*-like massacre of his whole court.

The singing, especially Angela Meade's Ermione, is of the highest level of virtuosity (some hair-raising top notes) and her tenor competitors – John Irvin's Pirro and Antonino Siragusa's Oreste, if not quite as generous of tone – are well up to the mark too. Alessandro de Marchi conducts with style and confidence. A still virtually unknown major Rossini opera definitely worth watching. **Mike Ashman**
Available to view for free at operavision.eu until May 8, 2020

ORANGES & LEMONS

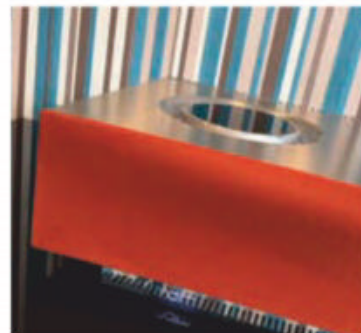
oandlhifi.co.uk

02079242040 - London SW11

bowers & wilkins rega sonos linn naim atc pmc arcam tellurium q chord co neat dynaudio rotel rel sennheiser chord electronics



MusicMatters
Specialists in sound & vision



Visit our website or call us for advice...

musicmatters.co.uk

Birmingham	0121 429 2811
Solihull	0121 742 0254
Leamington Spa	01926 888 644
London	020 8420 1925
Stratford	01789 414 533



Est. 1970
IAN EDWARDS
OF HARROGATE Est. 1970

Tel: **01423 500442**

for sales/enquiries or FREE brochure call - 01423 500442

www.iansbespokefurniture.co.uk



Handmade Bespoke Furniture
for CD's • LP's • DVD's & Books

The Old Chapel, 282 Skipton Road,
Harrogate, Yorkshire HG1 3HE

020 7226 5500
www.grahams.co.uk



"One of the five best hi-fi
shops in the world"
ARENA Magazine

Grahams Hi-Fi
Canonbury Yard
190a New North Road
London N1 7BS

Ian Harrison HI FI Sale!
UP TO 40% OFF!

SPECIALIST SUPPLIER OF TURNTABLES, TONEARMS,
CARTRIDGES, PHONO STAGES, RECORD CLEANING
MACHINES, HEADPHONES & CABLES
TEL: 01283 702875 (UK) 9AM - 9PM
EMAIL: IAN.HARRISON@MERCIAN.MYZEN.CO.UK

the solution

Loud Too Loud Way Too Loud

Excess gain in a system is a common problem, but it can be cured using **Rothwell In-Line Attenuators**. 1000's of satisfied customers worldwide.

£39/pair

www.rothwellaudioproducts.co.uk

**To
ADVERTISE
IN THIS
SECTION
PLEASE
CALL
020
7501
6368**

HIGH FIDELITY

● THE TECHNOLOGY THAT MAKES THE MOST OF YOUR MUSIC ●



THIS MONTH A slimline streaming receiver from Marantz, value-for-money speakers from Jamo, and is networking the new voodoo? **Andrew Everard**
Audio Editor

JANUARY TEST DISCS



A fine recording from Reference Recordings of an all-Prokofiev programme, with a sonorous, weighty Nevsky and space and dynamics in *Kijé*.



Schubert captured with a wonderful lightness of touch by Channel Classics founder and engineer Jared Sacks, and available in a range of formats.

CD is alive and well in the high end

A hugely capable CD/SACD player, a Bluetooth speaker with a retro look and new ways to stream

We keep being told that 'physical media', and in particular CDs, are finished, swept away by streaming services – but it seems the Japanese high-end company Esoteric would beg to differ. Just launched is its K1X, the flagship SACD/CD player/DAC in its Grandioso series, complete with a £36,200 price tag **1**. It replaces the K1 launched some three years ago and is the result of extensive internal upgrades, starting with the massive drive mechanism used to play the discs: this, the brand-new VRDS-Atlas, alone weighs 6.6kg and is mounted on a solid steel block for stability, with the motor now mounted below the disc tray to lower the centre of gravity and reduce vibration. The digital-to-analogue conversion is also new: it's Esoteric's MQA-compatible Master Sound Discrete DAC, using a separate circuit board for each channel and able to handle data at up to 768kHz PCM, as well as DSD at 22.5MHz or DSD512. It uses Esoteric's own Custom VCXO II master clock circuit, or can be used with the company's Grandioso G1 Master Clock unit.

Also very much high-end are the new Ultima 3 mono power amps from Chord Electronics **2**, the result of 30 years of amplifier development by the company. The amplifiers deliver 480W and are a direct replacement for Chord's SPM 1400 MkII amps. With amplifier technology originally developed for the £30,000 Ultima power amp, the new model sells for £11,000 per amplifier.

On the subject of power amplifiers, US-based McIntosh has launched its MC-257 model **3**, delivering up to 250W per



channel into up to seven channels. Designed for surround systems, the MC-257 can deliver 250W into the front left, centre and right channels, with 200W across all channels when in full seven-channel configuration. That's achieved with a significant increase in filter capacity, greatly improving dynamic headroom, while the amp also has the company's new TripleView meter to monitor the output of the front three channels. The MC-275 is £12,995.

Rather more affordable, but echoing the retro looks for which McIntosh is celebrated, is the latest Bluetooth speaker from Klipsch. The Heritage Groove **4** features the same wood finish seen in other Heritage products, complete with spun metal switches and knobs, but the £175 speaker – available in matt black or walnut finishes – nonetheless has thoroughly modern technology within. An 8cm full-range driver delivers a powerful sound, with active DSP equalisation ensuring impact even at low levels, while the company's Connect App will allow the user to adjust EQ settings. Power comes from an internal lithium-ion battery good for eight hours' use between charges, and as well as the Bluetooth wireless connection the speaker has a 3.5mm auxiliary input.

Launched alongside the Marantz NR1200 streaming receiver reviewed this

month is another network product from the company. The £999 PM7000N **5** takes the all-discrete design of the company's highly successful range of amplifiers and adds to it network streaming capability and HEOS multiroom. Using the proprietary HDAM-SA3 amplifier modules used in all of the company's top-quality amps, and with a 60W-per-channel output, the PM7000N also has a newly developed phono module for use with record players, along with four analogue line inputs and two optical digital. It can play music from USB memory devices, as well from network sources and streaming services, and supports files up to 192kHz/24bit and DSD64/128. The HEOS implementation supports internet radio plus streaming services including Spotify, Amazon Music HD and Deezer, while the entire digital section is shielded to prevent interference and can be deactivated when playing purely analogue sources.

Finally this month, a new subwoofer from Q Acoustics, the UK-based company known for its value-for-money entry-level speakers and high-end Concept models. The Q B 12 is the first in a new range of subwoofers from the company and combines a long-throw 30cm bass unit with a 220W Class D amplifier **6**, making it the most powerful Q Acoustics sub to date. A recessed panel in the braced cabinet hides away all the connections. The Q B 12 is available as part of surround systems from the company or alone in black or white vinyl finishes to match its 3000i range at £499, or in black or white gloss to match the Concept models at £699. **6**

● REVIEW PRODUCT OF THE MONTH

Marantz NR1200

Making network music simple is nothing new – Marantz has done it before with its compact ‘Melody’ systems – but can it continue the success with this hi-fi receiver?

The time has come to rethink network music: it's no longer ‘new technology’ or ‘the future of home audio’. Instead, it's here, it's well-established and it's come a long way from those early days when it was the preserve of those willing to experiment with computers and ways of connecting them to a hi-fi system.

For evidence of that, you need look no further than the range offered by Marantz, which remains one of the big names of mainstream hi-fi. It has simple all-in-one network-capable systems in the form of its ‘Melody’ series and high-end component network music players designed to match with the most high-end of systems. It even came up with its own product to bridge the gap between physical media – ie CDs – and computer-stored music: its ND8006 is a complete CD/network player. Its multichannel home cinema receivers have been able to play music from home storage and online services for some time now and, via its stablemate Denon, have also acquired HEOS integration, allowing them to function as part of a complete multiroom audio set-up.

Now it's expanding its network offering with a couple of new products. The £999 PM7000N combines its acclaimed hi-fi amplification with network capability, while the £599 NR1200 we have here takes the slimline form-factor the company has pursued for room-friendly AV receivers for some years and transforms it into a compact stereo receiver, complete with FM/DAB+ tuner for terrestrial radio as well as network audio capability. By conventional hi-fi standards it's decidedly



MARANTZ NR1200

Type Network receiver

Price £599

Power output 75Wpc

Inputs Moving magnet phono, three line, optical/coaxial digital, five HDMI, USB-A, network audio via Ethernet/Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, Apple AirPlay 2

File formats supported PCM-based up to 192kHz/24-bit, DSD64/128

Outputs Two pairs of speakers, pre-outs, subwoofer outputs, Zone 2 output, headphones

Other features HEOS wireless multiroom, voice control via Amazon Alexa, Apple Siri and Google Assistant

Accessories supplied Remote handset, antennae for DAB/FM and Wi-Fi/Bluetooth

Finishes Black or ‘Silvergold’

Dimensions (WxHxD) 44 x 10.5 x 36.7cm

marantz.co.uk

slimline, standing just 10.5cm tall; and though the amplification here is purely stereo, with 75W per channel on offer into an 8 ohm speaker load, the NR1200 retains some of its AV roots. It still has five HDMI inputs and one output, so AV sources such as Blu-ray players, computers and games consoles can be fed through it into a TV, and it will take sound in from a TV over HDMI using the Audio Return Channel system. In each case, incoming surround signals are downmixed to stereo.

So provided you don't want a full surround system and are happy to listen to your favourite TV programmes with better sound than your flatscreen can muster, just in stereo, this looks like an

ideal way of combining pure audio and video sound, and of course is slim enough to fit into most TV stands. Add a pair of speakers and you'll have a complete music and TV sound system way better than most soundbars, let alone the audio crammed into ever-slimmer TVs; and even when in standby mode the Marantz will pass audio and video from connected HDMI sources to your TV.

As well as its network audio capability, via both Ethernet and Wi-Fi – the latter sharing an antenna with the built-in Bluetooth audio receiver (there's also Apple Airplay 2) – the NR1200 has a trio of line inputs and a moving magnet phono stage for use with a turntable. In

HI-FI | HOME CINEMA | AUTOMATED SOLUTIONS



Based conveniently in central Guildford PJ Hi-Fi has specialised in the demonstration, provision and installation of quality hi-fi and home cinema for over 20 years. Our dedicated demonstration rooms allow you to listen in comfort to a range of exceptional products, whilst our friendly and knowledgeable staff are always on hand to answer any questions you may have. Whether you are looking for your first genuine hi-fi system, want to create a bespoke home cinema or wish to distribute music and movie throughout your house, PJ Hi-Fi can provide a solution to suit all budgets and criteria. As a truly independent retailer we are proud to say that we hand select, test and scrutinise all the products that we supply, ensuring a consistent standard of quality and reliability over our entire range of equipment. Drop in today to discuss your requirements or phone / email us to book a demonstration.

Tel: 01483 504801 | www.pjhifi.co.uk | Email: info@pjhifi.co.uk

3 Bridge Street | Guildford | Surrey GU1 4RY



SUGGESTED PARTNERS

The NR1200 is pretty complete but here's how to make the most of it ...

WHARFEDALE D330

With plenty of power and a smooth sound, the Marantz will partner well with speakers such as these Wharfedale D330 floorstanders.



HEOS 5 HS2

Expand the NR1200 into whole-house wireless sound with the addition of HEOS speakers: this HEOS 5 HS2 is an all-in-one stereo solution.



addition, there are optical and coaxial digital inputs, and the receiver can also play music from a USB memory device. Outputs are provided to allow the addition of an external power amplifier, along with a stereo feed for a subwoofer, with variable crossover and optimised bass redirection.

Add speakers for a complete music and TV sound system way better than most soundbars, let alone the audio crammed into TVs

The receiver can also feed audio to an extra zone in addition to your main speakers, using either a second set of speaker outputs or a line audio feed, for example to connect to another amplifier or active speakers, and can play different sources to each zone. However, with the HEOS integration provided, it's probably more convenient to share music using this, under the control of the HEOS app on a smartphone or tablet, as this grants the receiver even more flexibility when it comes to what's playing in each room, and is of course wireless. If you don't want to go down the HEOS route, you can still have app control in addition to the conventional handset provided with the receiver. It can be driven using the company's AVR Remote app, and can accept voice commands via Amazon Alexa, Apple Siri and Google Assistant.

When it comes to network audio capability, sourcing music from a home library stored on a computer or a dedicated Network Attached Storage device, the Marantz can play PCM-based formats – MP3/AAC/WMA/FLAC/ALAC/WAV – up to 192kHz/24-bit, and also DSD up to DSD5.6/128. When it comes to online audio services, the Marantz supports Amazon Music, Deezer, Spotify and Tidal, and uses TuneIn for its internet radio streams.

Tone and balance controls are provided, along with a headphone socket, and 'hands on' operation is simple, with large knobs provided for volume and input selection, and minor functions on clearly labelled

buttons across the fascia, one of which will dim the bright, clear display.

PERFORMANCE

The Marantz may be designed as a simple-to-use home entertainment solution but there's still characteristic engineering within. The power amplification uses separate, symmetrical channels, there are two digital-to-analogue converters for each channel for enhanced noise-rejection and separate windings on the mains transformer isolate the audio circuits from the control electronics.

In use, the NR1200 is as enjoyable as it is simple to use. While the sound here won't challenge that of the company's more ambitious dedicated two-channel amplifiers, being a little light in the bass and slightly softer in the treble, it gets all of the fundamentals very right indeed. Those limitations at the frequency extremes are relatively benign, and what one might expect from a product at this level: indeed, they're only really apparent when you put the Marantz up against equipment with a considerably heftier price tag.

That means this receiver conveys music in an entirely convincing fashion and is well suited to use with the kind of cost-effective speakers you'd expect to partner with a receiver at this level. Both the terrestrial and internet radio implementations work well, with excellent intelligibility with voices whether spoken or sung, and the streaming capability makes a persuasive case for enjoying your music in this manner and makes clear the extra detail on offer as you move up through sampling rates into DSD files.

Even the physical inputs – both line and digital – prove fine for use with affordable source components, with the moving magnet phono stage worthy of particular note for its smooth yet weighty sound, well suited to use with affordable turntables and the cartridges with which they are often supplied.

Marantz has got things right with this slimline receiver. It's comprehensively equipped yet simple to operate and delivers fine performance however you choose to use it, even through to playing TV sound via HDMI. It's an excellent buy for the money. **G**

Or you could try ...

Network audio equipment in different flavours is a growth area at the moment, so there is no shortage of options for enjoying music from your home storage or online sources.

Marantz M-CR612

If you want network audio in an even more compact form than the NR1200, look no further than another model from the Marantz stable, the M-CR612. Also known as the Melody X, this little system combines CD playback, a DAB+ tuner, HEOS music streaming and more. And with 2x60W output – or 4x30W to drive two zones – it has more than enough power for use with decent speakers.



Naim Mu-so Qb 2

Make things even more sleek with the all-in-one Naim Mu-so Qb 2, an ultra-compact one-box sound system with built-in speakers. It will play music from online and network sources, has inputs for external sources and delivers a big, rich sound from a surprisingly small enclosure. For more information, see naimaudio.com.



Audiolab's 6000N Play



If you want to add streaming capability to an existing system, look no further than Audiolab's 6000N Play network audio player. It looks simple – there's no display, and it's controlled by a remote app on a smartphone or tablet – but proves highly flexible, as well as delivering a crisp, highly detailed sound. Find out more at audiolab.co.uk.

● REVIEW JAMO C 93 II

Speakers with Scandi style

The styling may be slightly unusual but there's much to like about the sound of this bookshelf speaker from Jamo's revised Concert series

With more than 50 years of speaker manufacturing under its belt, Jamo has one of those Danish hi-fi legends to match its compatriot Bang & Olufsen. It was founded in 1966 in the fishing village of Glyngore by carpenter Preben Jacobsen, who started making speakers in his hen-house, whereas the start-up of Bang & Olufsen, in the attic of Svend Olufsen's parent's farmhouse, was partially funded by selling eggs from the farm. Clearly the links between poultry and hi-fi run deep in Denmark!

Jacobsen joined forces with his brother-in-law Julius Mortensen, and the first two letters of the two partners' names created the brand name. The company grew to become Europe's largest speaker manufacturer, employing over 400 people in its home town. However, faced with declining sales around the turn of the millennium and some twists and turns in its financial fortunes, it moved production to China and since 2005 has been owned by the US-based speaker maker Klipsch.

All of which explains some of the ways the company explains its latest speaker series, designated Concert 9 II. It says it's 'a high-tech audio collaborative utilising resources from around the globe', adding that 'honouring Scandinavian design roots, and focused on the modern minimalist lifestyle, Jamo delivers contemporary style with high-performance sound'.

You can certainly see that in the new line-up, which combines high-quality engineering with an eye-catching sculpted front baffle which might just be a matter of taste, and badging more akin to something you might find on a car than conventional speaker design. Drivers are attached with fixings hidden by trim-rings for a clean look, and are recessed into the baffle in order to control dispersion for a wider listening 'sweet spot' – all part of that intention to make them as domestically acceptable as possible.

The C 93 II, at £425/pr, isn't the smallest model in the new range: that honour falls to the C 91 II, which sells for £300/pr, stands some 8.5cm shorter at 26.5cm and uses a 10cm mid/bass driver in place of the larger speaker's 15cm unit. Above these sit two floorstanding models, the C 95 II at £700/pr and the £900/pr



JAMO C 93 II

Type Two-way reflex-ported bookshelf speakers

Drive units 25mm silk dome tweeter, 15cm HCCC mid/bass

Sensitivity 88dB/W/m

Nominal impedance 6 ohms

Claimed frequency response (+/-3dB) 45Hz-24kHz

Power handling 120W

Dimensions (HxWxD) 35x20x25.9cm

jamo.com

UK distributor **henleyaudio.co.uk**

C 97 II, while for those wanting to build a surround-sound system the range offers the £275 C 9 CEN II centre-channel speaker and the £475/pr C 9 SUR II, a three-way surround speaker.

Jamo was founded in a hen-house – clearly the links between poultry and hi-fi run deep in Denmark

Common across all these models is the use of a 25mm silk-dome tweeter, mounted in an 'Anti-Diffraction Waveguide' to give 'exceptionally smooth high frequency extension both on-axis and off', while mid/bass duties are in the hands of a driver using the company's Hybrid Composition Conical Cone. This is said to give 'the stiffness and strength of aluminium or titanium, with the transient response and smoothness of wood fibre', is mounted in a long-throw suspension for powerful bass and is fitted with a central plug to help disperse heat from the motor system and control dispersion.

The speakers have a rear-venting reflex port and come in a high-quality black ash finish with painted satin black baffles which

are bowed out beyond the sides of the main enclosure, and tweed grilles held in place by invisible magnets.

PERFORMANCE

With 88dB/W/m sensitivity and 6 ohm nominal impedance, the C 93 II speakers present a fairly easy load for the kind of amplification with which they're likely to be used, and actually formed a very attractive pairing with the Marantz NR1200 network receiver also reviewed this month. Their rich, well-extended bass made the most of the low-frequency ability of the receiver, while their crisp, clear treble, nicely controlled to avoid any spit or brittleness, was also highly enjoyable.

Whether playing the vibrant Royal Concertgebouw Mahler Symphony No 1, recorded live under Daniele Gatti for the orchestra's own label, or the dramatic Utah Symphony reading of Prokofiev's *Lieutenant Kijé* Suite under Thierry Fischer, the little Jamo speakers sound full and punchy beyond their size, with an admirable combination of weight and speed, while the midband and treble integrate well to give a performance that's as much about musical involvement as it is an exercise in hi-fi. Even more striking is the way the driver design manages to achieve a credible stereo image and consistent tonality even when one is listening off-axis. I used the very sketchy suggestion in the instruction manual of placing the speakers to form an equilateral triangle with the main listening position, moved them a bit into the room and gave them a slight toe-in more out of habit than to correct any deficiencies in imaging, and they sounded just fine.

Better than fine, in fact. There's no sense of the drivers beaming, as can be the case with some designs, with a loss of treble off-axis and minute adjustment being needed to create a three-dimensional sound stage 'picture'. Even with a demanding solo piano recording – in this case Pierluigi Camicia's live 'Prospekty' set – the Jamo speakers presented a stable image of the instrument, realistically sized and with good ambience.

Easy to partner and position, and with a sound that is both easy-going and musically credible, the C 93 IIs deserve to be auditioned by anyone looking for compact, room-friendly high-performance speakers. **G**

● ESSAY

Is networking hi-fi's new black art?

And you thought setting up a turntable was fiddly: now all sorts of mystique grows up around networks for music playback. Is there anything in it, asks **Andrew Everard**

Try as I might, I never quite got my head around the finer points of turntable set-up. I know there are experts out there who can, using the correct factory-supplied rig, get not just the correct amount of 'bounce' on a Linn turntable but the *right* kind; and I have friends who can make the tiniest adjustment to some parameter on a record player and transform the sound from 'ho-hum' to breathtaking.

Me? I was the one who always got gluey fingerprints on my Airfix models, long ago gave up working on my own cars as my efforts usually made the problem – and thus the inevitable garage bill – worse, and above all got into hi-fi about the time the CD was on the rise, just as everything became much easier.

So when the move began towards music stored on a hard drive and played over the home network, I thought things would simplify further – well, once I got over my initial fear of getting all hooked up, my discs ripped the right way. Oh, and learnt enough about IP addresses and the like to make sure one piece of equipment could consistently 'see' the other items it was supposed to. You learn quite quickly about the value of reserved, or static, IP addresses!

And that, I thought, was that – at least until I talked some more, listened a lot more and considered what I was hearing. Slowly but surely, I tried some things I'd heard about when it came to network audio, coming to each from a position of extreme scepticism, and found that some really did seem to make a difference – not always for the better, but definitely a difference – and others did nothing at all.

As regular readers will know, this has led to my having a 'music network', with inexpensive fibre-optic switches isolating my music servers and network players from the main internet connection to the house and all its associated hardware. I use linear power supplies on the switches in the network, simply because the standard linear power supplies appear to make the sound of my network audio components just a bit softer, and I have applied vibration-damping to the casework of the main network switch just upstream of my network player.

Why? Well, because the standard casework clanged like an old biscuit tin –



Inside Melco's £1999 network switch – can you spot the voodoo or is it just solid engineering?

which, while bad in audio equipment, admittedly shouldn't have any effect on a network switch – and a sheet of damping material only cost me a couple of pounds. It took me 15 minutes to cut to size and apply, and really seemed to make a difference.

What is clear is that many in the hi-fi industry are investigating the unknowns in networking

So it seems network audio isn't immune to some of that 'black arts' stuff for so long the mainstay of audio tweaking, although it has to be said that there's an equal amount of effort expended by those who see such things as tantamount to witchcraft and decry these ideas as unscientific, illusory and more evidence of the hi-fi industry's wish to befuddle, confuse and – above all – sell us things we don't need. As I said, 'twas ever thus.


What is clear, however, is that many in the hi-fi industry are both looking at these subjects and investigating the unknowns in networking, whether that be using wireless technology or the wired networks some of us favour in order to avoid the stability

problems possible in crowded wireless environments, such as the average British home with its plethora of Wi-Fi devices.

The Bowers & Wilkins Formation system, for example, uses wireless technology but sets up a mesh network between the speakers in a system, avoiding disturbances on the main network. Mesh networks of this kind are nothing new but this seems a sensible strategy, if not the simplest one, in order to achieve the accuracy of synchronisation for which the Formation engineers were striving. Meanwhile Melco, a company that has spearheaded both file servers designed for music and the isolation of network music playing devices from potential interference on the networks to which they are connected, has put its head on the block (or is that its money where its mouth is?) with the launch of its 'audio-specific S100 data switch', promising 'improved sound quality for any network audio device using an Ethernet connection'.

As they use to say in the old Westerns, 'that there's fightin' talk', but the company says of this £1999 device: 'With the acclaimed Melco N1 series, we eliminated the data switch from the data path (server to player) and lifted sound quality hugely. But it was still clear that the rest of the network was having an effect. It was, perhaps, less obvious on lesser systems, but as soon as we fixed everything else, it remained a nagging problem. Work started to analyse exactly what was going on and the resulting S100 resolves those final nagging sound quality issues.'

That work has involved replacing standard IT parts with Melco's own components to create 'an audio-specific mainboard with a 1.5MB packet buffer, a powerful processor, plus an audio-grade capacitor bank [for a] low-noise design, coupled with highly precise data-handling'. Does it do what it says? Is it worth the money? I'm yet to try it, and so can't comment. But I know that the arrival of the company's 'audiophile' music libraries attracted plenty of cynicism, including from myself. Now, at many a hi-fi show, they're all but ubiquitous, with many brands using them to demonstrate their network products.

So someone must be hearing something ... 

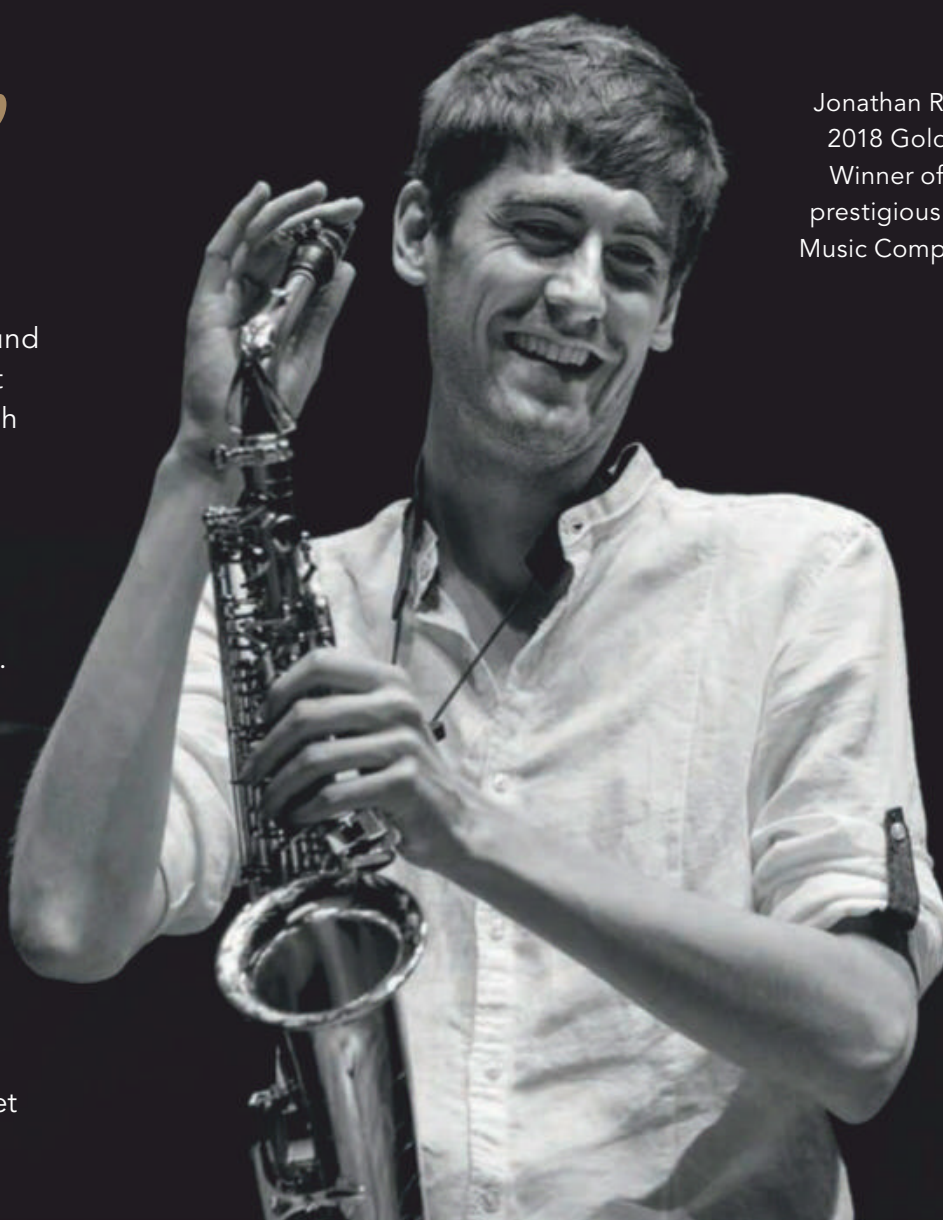
A membership club with a difference

ROSL is a unique, not-for-profit, private members organisation; bringing people together from around the world to meet, socialise and foster an interest in the Commonwealth. This is best realised through our arts programme that nurtures the careers of emerging professional musicians and visual artists and our programme of education and enterprise projects. Our members make a difference to people's lives while enjoying the comforts of a central London clubhouse overlooking Green Park.

To find out more about becoming a member, or attending our exceptional programme of public concerts and art exhibitions, visit www.rosl.org.uk or call 020 7408 0214.



Royal Over-Seas League
Over-Seas House
Park Place, St James's Street
London SW1A 1LR



Jonathan Radford,
2018 Gold Medal
Winner of ROSL's
prestigious Annual
Music Competition.

Potton Hall Recording Studio

- Set in Suffolk Countryside 5 miles from Southwold
- First class acoustics and facilities
- Steinway Model 'D' Grand Piano available
- A complete CD package available
- Reasonable rates
- Accommodation/Leisure Spa available on site
- Full Brochure available by request

www.pottonhallltd.co.uk | 01728 648265



GRAMOPHONE

**TO ADVERTISE IN
THIS SECTION**

**PLEASE CALL
020 7501 6368**

**0207
689
7533**



LPs + CDs BOUGHT

ANYWHERE IN THE UK
FAIR PRICES PAID

info@watsonrecords.co.uk

WATSON RECORDS

revolutions

records and cds

We buy classical LPs
From 1950s - 1970s

Examples - we will pay up to:

£2500 for Leonid Kogan on Columbia SAX

£1500 for Johanna Martzy on Columbia 33CX

£4000 for Andre Levy on Lumen

Top prices paid for EMI ASD, Columbia SAX, Decca SXL.



*Run by musicians
for music lovers*

We will travel to anywhere in the UK to view sizeable collections or can buy by post from your lists.

Quality hi-fi equipment purchased -

EMT - GARRARD - TANNOY - THORENS Etc.

CD Collections also purchased

For prompt attention, contact:

Leslie Laine, BA (hons)

or Dr Matthew Pollard

Revolutions, 1st Floor 67 Victoria Road,

Worthing, West Sussex BN11 1UN

email: info@revolutions33.co.uk

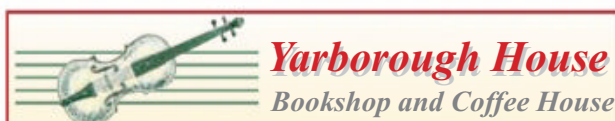
Tel: 01903 209553

www.revolutions33.co.uk

Classical LPs/CDs wanted.
Can collect or deal by post.

www.esmetronrecords.com
esmetronrecords@btinternet.com

**TO ADVERTISE IN THIS
SECTION PLEASE CALL
020 7501 6368**



4,000 CDs Rapidly Changing Stock.
Much unusual repertoire. All guaranteed.

Large secondhand general book stock.

We buy interesting LPs, CDs, DVDs and quality books,
particularly music, philosophy and literature.
Will collect or pay postage.

No mail order.

The Square, Bishops Castle, Shropshire, SY9 5BN
Open 5 days 10am - 5pm / Closed Mon & Wed

www.yarboroughhouse.com
01588 638318



SCHOPPER AG
(Switzerland)

The best partner for your Thorens TD 124 !
Restorations & Parts

www.thorens-td124.ch

BUY • SELL • TRADE
vinyl • CDs • DVDs • box sets

nothing legal refused! (ID required)

CLASSICAL MUSIC EXCHANGE

38 Notting Hill Gate, W11, open 7 days 10am - 8pm

www.mgeshops.com

020 7792 5847

GRAMOPHONE

1923-2017,
VOL. 1 NO.1-VOL. 95 2017-18

COMPLETE, BOUND AND INDEXED
OFFERS WELCOME
Buyer collects from London NW3

EMAIL

barbarasimons26@gmail.com

CD MAIL ORDER SERVICE
FREEPHONE 0800 999 6994

Celebrating 11 years as a mail-order service to those starting their love affair with music, clever collectors, also to music groups and at concerts.

FREE P&P with your 1st ORDER

Colchester Classics, St Austell,
47 Gladwin Road, Colchester CO2 7HW

FREEPHONE 0800 999 6994

Email: liz@colchesterclassics.co.uk
www.colchesterclassics.co.uk

**COLCHESTER CLASSICS - WHERE
CLASSICAL MUSIC MATTERS!**

TO ADVERTISE PLEASE CALL 020 7501 6368

NOTES & LETTERS

Memories of Jessye Norman and Stephen Cleobury • Sinfonia of London reborn

Write to us at Gramophone, Mark Allen Group, St Jude's Church, Dulwich Road, London SE24 0PB or gramophone@markallengroup.com

Gracious Jessye Norman

I very much appreciated Mark Pullinger's kind remembrances and Edward Seckerson's pithy anecdotes about the late Jessye Norman (November, pages 10 and 15). I had the privilege and pleasure of meeting her on a number of occasions when she performed in Augusta, Georgia, a place that both of us called home.

In person, she was warm and gracious with a larger-than-life personality that simply filled any space that she happened to occupy. I fondly remember one particular meeting at a reception that followed a programme she had sung in a benefit concert for her School of the Arts. This school, just one example of how she gave back to others, enables young people, mostly of colour, to experience the joy of performing on stage and developing life-long interests in music and dance. We had a nice chat during which I had the temerity to tell Ms Norman that she was in my will, not as an heir, but that I wanted her recording of 'Im Abendrot' from Richard Strauss's *Vier Letzte Lieder* to be played at my funeral. I added that, with a heavenly voice like hers, I would certainly be able to hear it even after my passing. I could see that this moved her. She gave me a big hug and said, 'Honey, that is one of the nicest things that I have ever heard'.

While my wife and I were attending her recent 'life celebration' in Augusta, I never thought that she would precede me in death. Fortunately, we have her recordings and these will keep her in our hearts and minds for the rest of our lives.

Lawrence Devoe

Augusta, GA, USA

Why Sinfonia of London?

The recent acclaimed revival of the Sinfonia of London under John Wilson in Korngold (Chandos, 10/19) has reminded us of the Elgar/Vaughan Williams EMI recording they famously made with John Barbirolli. Why was this orchestra engaged? The recording was made on May 10, 11 and 17, 1962. Barbirolli's version of the *Enigma* Variations with the Philharmonia Orchestra was also made in London in May 1962, so presumably they could have been used instead. This sudden appearance of the Sinfonia of London, until recently their only one in the standard repertoire, suggests that there

Letter of the Month

Hugely indebted to Stephen Cleobury

Following the sad news of the passing of Sir Stephen Cleobury CBE I would like to highlight, among the mass of worthy tributes, the enormous contribution he made to the survival of the Choir of Westminster Cathedral between 1979 and 1982 and thus ensuring its future.

The choir and school were under severe threat in the few years before he was appointed Master of Music. Under his tenancy at the Cathedral it reached new heights and continued world-class recognition. He had the support of a most dedicated team (Andrew Wright as Assistant Organist, followed by James O'Donnell). Also the Archbishop of the day Cardinal Basil Hume understood the importance of the daily musical liturgy.

As a former chorister of the choir I am most privileged to have sung during these years and to have benefited like so



Stephen Cleobury: champion of the choir

many others from Cleobury's brilliance as a Master of Music. The weekly musical routine was tough – six sung Masses, one Vespers and 12 hours of choir practice. One particularly gruelling Christmastide for the first (and I hasten to add with relief 'last') time included Mass and Vespers on Boxing Day.

Cleobury remarked after the latter had finished, 'I wouldn't ask a professional to do the schedule that they've had to do' – but that's my point, Cleobury *did* do it and he took us all with him in his most assured and unprepossessing way. I will always be indebted to him for my love of choral music and for the many memories that all us choristers shared.

Richard Cumpston Jones
Saint-Omer, France

(See also our tribute to Cleobury on page 11)

RAYMOND WEIL
GENEVE

RAYMOND WEIL are a Swiss luxury watch brand inspired by horology, music and family.

This *toccata* classic wristwatch features a sleek stainless steel 39mm case, Swiss quartz movement, sophisticated Roman numeral dial with a date window at 3 o'clock and complemented by a black leather strap with alligator finish.

This elegant and timeless *toccata* model celebrates the artistic and musical spirit behind the brand's DNA. Following in the footsteps of the great composers, *toccata* promotes RAYMOND WEIL's Swiss horology while respecting the tradition and heritage handed down from generation to generation within the family company.

Each Letter of the Month now receives a **RAYMOND WEIL** *toccata* classic wristwatch RRP £595



is a story here which your readers would find of great interest.

Reg Snow, Chester, Cheshire

Editorial notes

Patrick Rucker writes: 'In my review of Lucas Debargue's recording of Scarlatti sonatas (November, page 71), I wrote that the only complete recording of the sonatas was by the late Scott Ross. In fact, complete recordings of the Scarlatti sonatas by Pieter-Jan Belder (Brilliant

Classics) and Richard Lester (Nimbus) have since appeared, and Carlo Grante (Music & Arts) has been the first pianist to complete an entire Scarlatti cycle.'

In Richard Wigmore's article on *opera buffa* (October, page 13), some additional italics inadvertently crept in during the discussion of Piccinni's *La buona figliuola*; it should have read that the opera sets a Goldoni libretto adapted from Richardson's *Pamela*, Cimarosa and Paisiello.

OBITUARIES

An inspired opera director, a choirmaster and a great producer

JONATHAN MILLER

Director, writer and broadcaster

Born July 21, 1934

Died November 27, 2019



The polymath Jonathan Miller has died at the age of 85.

Miller cut his teeth as an opera director in the 1970s with Kent Opera, directing *Così fan tutte* and *Rigoletto*. This led to a hugely successful period at English National Opera in the 1980s, where, among other operas, his *Rigoletto* became a watershed in his career as an opera director; set in New York's Little Italy in the 1950s, 'La donna è mobile' was triggered by a hefty shove to a jukebox in a Hopper-esque bar. The production lured back audiences year after year, as did revivals of Miller's *Der Rosenkavalier* and *La traviata*. At New York's Met, Miller directed acclaimed productions of *Kát'a Kabanová* in 1991 and *Pelléas* in 1995, but fell out with the company when he refused to bow to Cecilia Bartoli's demands of inserting two alternative arias for Susanna in *The Marriage of Figaro*. In all, Miller directed more than 50 operas.

COLIN MAWBY

Choirmaster and composer

Born May 9, 1936

Died November 24, 2019



Colin Mawby, a significant figure in Roman Catholic musical life, has died aged 83. A chorister at Westminster Cathedral under George Malcom,

he studied at the Royal College of Music before taking posts including at Portsmouth Cathedral (his town of birth), prior to returning to Westminster Cathedral, firstly as assistant, then, in 1961, becoming Master of Music. As well as singing the daily offices, during his time leading the choir it made two visits to Rome including, in 1970, singing a papal Mass in St Peter's Basilica. Mawby left Westminster Cathedral in 1975, then in 1981 moved to Ireland to become Choral Director for RTE, and where he later helped establish the National Irish Chamber Choir.

A prolific composer, he wrote more than 50 Mass settings, two operas for children, a Te Deum for the 50th anniversary celebrations of Liverpool Metropolitan Cathedral (whose choir recently released an album of his music on Priory, 4/17), and a setting of Psalm 23 included on Charlotte Church's 'Voice of an Angel' album. He described his music as 'approachable', adding: 'I make great use of sonority and have been much influenced by plainchant. I value the spiritual element in music.'

WOLF ERICHSON

Producer

Born August 25, 1928

Died October 22, 2019



An outstanding figure in the recording of early music has died at the age of 91.

Wolf Erichson recorded major musicians from Nikolaus Harnoncourt, Gustav Leonhardt and Frans Brüggen to Bruno Weil, Tafelmusik and Giuliano Carmignola.

During a career that produced some 800 recordings, Erichson worked at Telefunken (later Teldec) on its Das Alte Werk label, and later two labels that he created, SEON in the 1970s and, in 1991, the Vivarte imprint for Sony Classical.

Among his recordings are the two versions of the Bach Cello Suites made by Anner Bylsma, the first a truly landmark project that quickly achieved classic status ('revelatory performances, as significant a landmark, though for different reasons, as those of Casals were in the mid- to late-1930s,' wrote Nicholas Anderson in January 1993); the second a magnificent return to music that the cellist had long lived with.

He will be remembered for many recordings, not least the vast Bach sacred cantata series for Telefunken, conducted by Leonhardt and Harnoncourt. He also produced Leonhardt's 1980 set of the Bach *Brandenburg Concertos*. Outside the field of early music, he supervised the DG recording of Bartók's Six String Quartets played by the Emerson Quartet which was voted *Gramophone's* Recording of the Year in 1989.

For the complete, unabridged versions of these obituaries, visit gramophone.co.uk/news

NEXT MONTH
FEBRUARY 2020



Meeting John Wilson

The conductor's revival of the Sinfonia of London received rave reviews for its recent spectacular Korngold album. As the next release arrives, Richard Bratby interviews this most versatile and impressive of orchestra builders

Grosvenor's Chopin

A pianist of rare refinement and seemingly effortless virtuosity, Benjamin Grosvenor talks to Tim Parry ahead of the release of his new Decca album

Mahler's Fourth Symphony

David Gutman listens to the compelling catalogue of recordings of this *fin de siècle* composition and names his favourite




GRAMOPHONE

ON SALE JANUARY 29

DON'T MISS IT!

NEW RELEASES INDEX

The latest releases on CD, SACD, DVD, Blu-ray and download

Key: ⑆ Full price £10 and over ⑓ Medium price £7.76 – £9.99 ② Budget price £6.25 – £7.75 ⑤ Super-budget price up to £6.24 ③ Reissue ① Historic  SACD  DVD  Blu-ray ④ LP

CD & SACD

ALPHA *outhere-music.com/alpha*

Bach, JS Concs for Two Hpds. *Fortin/Frankenberg/Ens Masques.* ⑆ **ALPHA572**

Beethoven Pf Sons, Opp 106 & 111. *Gorini.* ⑆ **ALPHA591**

Beethoven Stg Qnts, Opp 29, 104 & 137. *WDR SO Chbr Plyrs, Cologne.* ⑆ **ALPHA585**

Charpentier Orphée aux Enfers. *Vox Luminis/Meunier/A Nocte Temporis/Van Mechelen.* ⑆ **ALPHA566**

Haydn Sym, Vol 8: La Roxolana. *Giardino Armonico/Antonini.* ⑆ **ALPHA682**

Various Cpsrs Arianna – Cantatas. *Lindsey/Arcangelo/Cohen.* ⑆ **ALPHA576**

Various Cpsrs Compositrices à l'aube du XX^e siècle – Wks for FI & Pf. *Hurel/Couvert.* ⑆ **ALPHA573**

ANIMA E CORPO *animaecorpo.es*


Various Cpsrs Baile perdido. *Andueza/Galanía.* ⑆ **AEC007**

ARCANA *outhere-music.com/en/labels/arcana*

Beethoven Cpte Pf Sons on Period Insts (r1980s). *Badura-Skoda.* ⑤ ⑨ ③ **A203**

Mozart Eine kleine Nachtmusik. Divertimentos. *Archi di S Cecilia/Piovano.* ⑆ **A471**

ARTA *czecheverything.co.uk*

Caldara Amor no ha legge. *Ens Damian/Hanzilk.* ⑆ ② +  **F10240**

Various Cpsrs Portrait of Clavichord. *Tůma.* ⑆ ② **F10241**

Various Cpsrs Taki Ochi – Wks for Shakuhachi (r2003). *Matoušek.* ⑆ ③ **F10119**

AUDITE *audite.de*

Liszt Dante Sym. Tasso. Künstlerfestzug. *Staatskapelle Weimar/Karabits.* ⑆ **AUDITE97 760**

AVANTI


Various Cpsrs Klezmer Karma. *Lakatos Ens.* ⑆ **AVA10652**


Various Cpsrs Passion. *Lakatos Ens.* ⑆ ② **AVA10642**

BERLIN CLASSICS *edel.com*


Arutiunian. Haydn. Hummel Standards – Tpt Concs. *Höfele/BBC Scottish SO/BBC NOW/Ward.* ⑆ **0301314BC**


BIS *bis.se*

Barber. Tchaikovsky Vn Concs. *Dalene/Norrköping SO/Blendulf.* ⑆  **BIS2440**

Berg. Mahler. Samuel Clytemnestra – Orch Songs. *Hughes, R/BBC NOW/van Steen.* ⑆  **BIS2408**

Brahms Five Sons for Vn & Pf, Vol 2. *Wallin/Pöntinen.* ⑆  **BIS2419**

Dukas Apprenti sorcier **Roussel** Festin de l'araignée. *Pays de la Loire Nat Orch/Rophé.* ⑆  **BIS2432**

Mahler Sym No 4. *Sampson/Minnesota Orch/Vänskä.* ⑆  **BIS2356**

Various Cpsrs Jugendstil: Songs 1898-1916. *Tilling/Rivinius.* ⑆  **BIS2414**

BLUE HERON *blueheronchoir.org*

Ockeghem Cpte Songs, Vol 1. *Blue Heron/Metcalfe.* ⑆ **BHCD1010**

B RECORDS *b-records.fr*

Brahms Va Sons. Two Songs. *Berthaud/Laulan/Le Sage.* ⑆ **LBM023**

Greif Chants de l'âme. *Garnier/Decouture/Garcia/Levionnois/Hattat.* ⑆ **LBM024**

BRIDGE *bridgerecords.com*

Debussy Children's Corner. Études. *Karis.* ⑆ **BRIDGE9529**

Ruders Edn, Vol 15. *McDermott/Quattro Mani/Odense SO/Shwartz/Delfs.* ⑆ **BRIDGE9531**

BRILLIANT CLASSICS *brilliantclassics.com*

Asencio Cote Gtr Wks. *Mesirca.* ② **95806**

Bach, JS Famous Cantatas. *Netherlands Bach Collegium/Leusink.* ⑤ ⑤ ③ **96109**

Beethoven Cpte Vn Sons & Vc Sons. *Baráti/Rosler/Würtz.* ⑤ ⑤ ③ **96112**

Bellinzani. Marcello. Vivaldi Wks for Rec. *Staropoli.* ② **96052**

Castelnuovo-Tedesco. Pizzetti Arioso – Wks for Vc & Pf. *Chicchese/Panzarella.* ② **95812**

Cimarosa 21 Org Sons. *Chezzi.* ② **95781**

Debussy. Franck. Ravel Vn Sons. *Baráti/Würtz.* ② **95576**

Dvořák Cpte Concs & Sym Poems. *St Louis SO/Susskind/Janáček PO/Kuchar.* ⑤ ⑤ ③ **96110**

Eberl Cpte Pf Sons. *Quintavalle.* ⑤ ② **95929**

Lebègue Pièces de clavessin, Books 1 & 2. *Álvarez.* ⑤ ③ **95671**

Leclair Cpte Vn Concs. *Ruhadze/Ens Violini Capricciosi.* ⑤ ③ **95290**

Mozart Cpte Wind Concs & Serenades. *Staatskapelle Dresden/Kurz/Blomstedt/Netherlands CO/Goodman.* ⑤ ⑤ ③ **96111**

Pasquini Sonate per Gravecembalo. *Loreggian.* ⑤ ⑤ **94826**

Röntgen Orch, Chor & Chbr Wks. *Viotta Ens/Netherlands Chbr Ch/Netherlands RSO/van Steen.* ⑤ ② ③ **96104**

Sibelius Cpte Sym, & Sym Poems. *Berlin SO/Sanderling, K/Moscow PO/Sinaisky.* ⑤ ⑤ ③ **96113**

Tartini Vn Concs. Vn Sons. *Marzadori/Nuova Orch da Camera 'Ferruccio Busoni'/Belli.* ② **95769**

Various Cpsrs French Baroque FI Edn. *Various artists.* ⑤ ⑦ **95783**

BR-KLASSIK *br-online.de*

Respighi Pini di Roma **Shchedrin** Carmen Ste (pp2019/17). *Bavarian RSO/Jansons.* ⑆ **900183**

CAPELLA DE MINISTRERS *capelladeministrers.es*

Various Cpsrs Circle in the Water. *Capella de Ministrers/Magraner.* ⑆ **CDM1947**

CAPRICCIO *capriccio.at*

Abert Ekkehard. *Sols incl Kaufmann/SWR Rad Orch, Kaiserslautern/Falk.* ② ② **C5392**

Busoni Arlecchino. Turandot. *Sols incl Pape/Berlin RSO/Albrecht, G.* ② ② **C5398**


Zemlinsky Traumgörge. *Sols/Frankfurt RSO/Albrecht, G.* ② ② **C5395**

CHAMPS HILL *champsillrecords.co.uk*

Various Cpsrs Kokoschka's Doll. *Tomlinson/Madylus/Counterpoise.* ⑆ **CHRC150**

CHANDOS *chandos.net*

Beethoven Late Stg Qts. *Brodsky Qt.* ⑓ ③ **CHAN20114**

Goossens Orch Wks, Vol 3. *Melbourne SO/Davis, A.* ⑆  **CHSA5193**

Saint-Saëns Wks for Pf & Orch, Vol 2. *Lortie/BBC PO/Gardner.* ⑆ **CHAN20038**

Various Cpsrs Russian Connection. *Alder/Middleton.* ⑆ **CHAN20153**

CONCERTO CLASSICS *concertoclassics.it*

Josquin Intavolature per liuto. *Cinquina.* ⑆ **CNT2116**

Verdi Fantasias for Vn & Pf. *Bidoli/Canino.* ⑆ **CNT2115**

Willaert Willaert e la Scuola Fiamminga a San Marco. *Cappella Marciana/Pifarescha/Gemmani.* ⑆ **CNT2117**

CONVIVIUM *conviviumrecords.co.uk*

Benham Sacred Chor Wks. *Convivium Sgrs/Archer/Norman.* ⑆ **CR050**

White, J Pf Sons, Vol 2. *Powell.* ⑆ **CR051**

CPO *jpc.de/jpcng/cpo/home*

Antheil Serenades Nos 1 & 2. Orch Wks. *Württemberg PO, Reutlingen/Haimor.* ⑆ **CPO555 196-2**

Bach, JS Cpte Hpd & Vn Concs. *Conc Copenhagen/Mortensen.* ⑓ ⑤ **CPO555 299-2**

Donizetti Stg Qts Nos 4-6. *Pleyel Qt, Cologne.* ⑆ **CPO555 240-2**

Handel Almira. *Sols incl Baráth/Boston Early Music Fest Orch/O'Dette/Stubbs.* ⑆ ④ **CPO555 205-2**

Kuhnau Cpte Sacred Vks, Vol 5. *Opella Musica/Camerata Lipsiensis/Meyer.* ⑆ **CPO555 260-2**

Tcherepnin Narcisse et Echo. Princesse lointaine. *Bamberg SO/Borowicz.* ⑆ **CPO555 250-2**

Various Cpsrs Mirabile mysterium. *Saxon Voc Ens/Jung.* ⑆ **CPO555 318-2**

Various Cpsrs Pf Wks by Israeli Cpsrs. *Lessing.* ⑆ **CPO555 294-2**

CRYSTAL RECORDS *crystalrecords.com*

Various Cpsrs Bhavani's Oboe. *Kotha/Russ/Reside.* ⑆ **CD826**

CYPRES *cypres-records.com*

Various Cpsrs Clarinetti all'opera. *IMEP Namur CI Ch.* ⑆ **CYP2625**

DACAPO *dacapo-records.dk*

Gudmundsen-Holmgreen. Madsen Wks for Vn & Orch. *Åstrand/Salo/Danish Nat SO/Bancroft/Collon.* ⑆ **8 226138**

DANACORD *danacord.dk*

Buxtehude Hpd Wks. Org Wks (r1986). *Kappel/Sebestyén.* ⑆ ③ **DACOCD852**

Nielsen Vn Sons (r1984) **Paganini** Wks for Vn & Gtr (r1983). *Sjögren/Øland/Hannibal.* ⑆ ③ **DACOCD850**

Various Cpsrs Danish Popular Songs (r1929-32). *Rosvænge.* ⑆ ③ **DACOCD855**

Various Cpsrs New Nordic Pf Wks (r1986). *Klein, E.* ⑆ ③ **DACOCD854**

Various Cpsrs Tribute – Rad Recs (bp1962-87). *Bengtsson.* ② ③ **DACOCD846**

Various Cpsrs Vn Wks (r1928-59). *Telmányi/Hubay.* ⑆ ③ **DACOCD851**

DB PRODUCTIONS *db-productions.se*

Various Cpsrs Swedish Miniatures – Pf Wks. *Forsberg.* ⑆ **DBCD194**

DELOS *delosmusic.com*

Giuliani. Sollima. Vivaldi Italian Gtr Concs. *Segre/Orch I Pomeriggi Musicali/Boccardo.* ⑆ **DE3546**

Rorem/Robinson Stations of the Cross – Org Improvisations. *Robinson.* ⑆ **DE3549**

DELPHIAN *delphianrecords.co.uk*

Beethoven Wks for Pf Four Hands. *Hill/Frith.* ⑆ **DCD34221**

DIVINE ART *divine-art.co.uk*

Östlund Mistral. *Various artists.* ⑆ **DDA25199**

Various Cpsrs English Pf Trios. *Trio Anima Mundi.* ⑆ **DDA25158**

DYNAMIC *dynamic.it*

Beethoven Pf Qts, WoO36. *Lüthi/Asabuki/Foster/Miucci.* ⑆ **CDS7854**

Ferrabosco Lessons for Solo Lyra Viol. *Biordi.* ⑆ **CDS7852**

Sammartini Hpd Sons. *Heger.* ⑆ **CDS7841**

FUGA LIBERA *outhere-music.com/fugalibera*

Ysaÿe Tribute. *Various artists.* ② ⑤ **FUG758**

Various Cpsrs Pf Wks. *Bengi.* ⑆ **FUG759**

GEGA NEW *english.geganew.com*

Various Cpsrs Famous Op Voices of Bulgaria (pp1957/67). *Bareva.* ⑆ ③ **GD408**

Various Cpsrs Nightingale's Song. *Svetoglas Bulgarian Polyphony.* ⑆ **GD409**

GENUIN	<i>genuin.de</i>
Haydn Four Pf Sons. <i>Meyer.</i>	ⓕ GEN20686
Illés. Janárčeková. Streich Insights Tomorrow. <i>Asasello Qt.</i>	ⓕ GEN20639
Liszt. Schubert Impromptus, Songs & Consolations – Pf Wks. <i>Apostel-Pankratowsky.</i>	ⓕ GEN20556
Various Cpsrs British Classics. <i>Saxon Wind Philh/Clamor.</i>	ⓕ GEN20658
Various Cpsrs Latin – Pf Duet Wks from South America. <i>Duo Lontano.</i>	ⓕ GEN20685
GOD RECORDS	<i>godrec.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Imminent Death. <i>Flying Luttenbachers.</i>	ⓕ ② GOD56

GRAND PIANO	
Harsányi Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 1. <i>Koukl.</i>	ⓕ GP806
Hundsnes Clavinatas Nos 1-7. Downtoned Beats. Pf Son No 1. <i>Mikkola.</i>	ⓕ GP800
Rota Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 1. <i>Hodgkinson.</i>	ⓕ GP827
HÄNSSLER CLASSIC	<i>haenssler-classic.de</i>
Bach, CPE Pf Concs. <i>Rische/Leipzig CO.</i>	Ⓢ ④ HC19043
Bach, JS Cpte Oratorios. <i>Gächinger Kantorei/Bach Collegium, Stuttgart/Rilling.</i>	ⓑ ④ HC19047
Ippolitov-Ivanov Pf Transcrs. <i>Ivanova/Zagarinskiy.</i>	ⓕ HC19039
Various Cpsrs Humoresques – Pf Wks. <i>Gülbadamova.</i>	ⓕ HC19036

HARMONIA MUNDI	<i>harmoniamundi.com</i>
Bach, CPE Ob Concs. Syms. <i>Löffler/AAM Berlin.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 2601
Beethoven Leonore (pp2017). <i>Sols/Freiburg Baroque Orch/Jacobs.</i>	ⓕ ② HMM90 2414/15
Fauré Fauré & his Poets – Songs. <i>Mauillon/Le Bozec.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 2636

Various Cpsrs Complices – Wks for Vc & Pf. <i>Queyras/Tharaud.</i>	ⓕ HMM90 2274
HYPERION	<i>hyperion-records.co.uk</i>
Bartók. Korngold Pf Qnts. <i>Lane/Goldner Qt.</i>	ⓕ CDA68290
Brahms Final Pf Wks. <i>Hough.</i>	ⓕ CDA68116
Hellinck Missa Surrexit pastor Lupi Te Deum. Motets. <i>Brabant Ens/Rice.</i>	ⓕ CDA68304
Vaughan Williams Syms Nos 3 & 4. <i>BBC SO/Brabbins.</i>	ⓕ CDA68280

LADYBIRD	
Dylan Out of the Bell Jar. <i>Lundgren, I.</i>	ⓕ 79556854
LINN	<i>linnrecords.com</i>
Bach, JS Well-Tempered Consort. <i>Fretwork.</i>	ⓕ CKD618
LPO	<i>lpo.co.uk</i>
Shankar Sukanya (pp2017). <i>Sols/LPO/Murphy.</i>	Ⓢ ② LPO0115
LYRITA	<i>lyrita.co.uk</i>
Coke Vc Sons. <i>Wallfisch/Callaghan.</i>	ⓕ SRCD384

MELODIYA	<i>melody.su</i>
Slonimsky, S Anthology of Contemporary Chor Wks by Russian Cpsrs, Vol 2 (r2016/19). <i>Various artists.</i>	ⓕ MELCD100 2598
MÉTIER	<i>divine-art.co.uk</i>
Artyomov. Gubaidulina. Suslin Wks (r1977-88). <i>Astraea.</i>	ⓕ MSV28595

MODE	<i>moderecords.com</i>
Feldman For Bunita Marcus. <i>Takahashi.</i>	ⓕ MOD-CD314
Messiaen Harawi. <i>Sun/Perifanova.</i>	ⓕ ② MOD-LP310
MSR CLASSICS	<i>msrcd.com</i>
Bellido Sym No 1. Orch Wks. <i>Fort Worth SO/Harth-Bedoya.</i>	ⓕ MS1737

Zaimont Chbr Wks. <i>Amernet Qt/Vitenson/Calloway/Wilson.</i>	ⓕ MS1709
Various Cpsrs Db Wks. <i>Oppelt.</i>	ⓕ MS1221
Various Cpsrs Twilight World: Tribute to Women Jazz Cpsrs. <i>Vice/Kaupa/George.</i>	ⓕ MS1705
MUSIC MEDIA	<i>musicmedia.it</i>
Bach, JS Pf Wks. <i>Bacchetti.</i>	ⓕ MM05
MUSO	<i>muso.mu</i>
Various Cpsrs Concerti a quattro. <i>Ens Bradamante.</i>	ⓕ MU034

NAXOS	<i>naxos.com</i>
Beethoven Fugues & Rarities for Stg Qt. <i>Fine Arts Qt.</i>	ⓑ 8 574051
Beethoven König Stephan. Leonore Prohaska (excs). <i>Sols/Turku PO/Segerstam.</i>	ⓑ 8 574042
Castèrède Cpte Wks for FI, Vol 2. <i>Tolt/Arendt/Gonzalez/Patterson/Kibbey/Lee/Antero Winds.</i>	ⓑ 8 573950
Cimarosa Ovs, Vol 6. <i>Czech Chbr PO, Pardubice/Gallois.</i>	ⓑ 8 574046
Faria Gomes Chbr Wks. <i>Thurlow/Picado/Santos/Johnson, N/Fernandes.</i>	ⓑ 8 579029
Franck Wks for Pf & Orch. <i>Biret/Bilkent SO/Pâris.</i>	ⓑ 8 571403
Glass Vn Conc No 2. <i>Plawner/Berne CO/Bach, P.</i>	ⓑ 8 559865
Liszt Cpte Pf Wks, Vol 54: Historical Hungarian Portraits. <i>Jandó.</i>	ⓑ 8 574059
Magnard Syms Nos 1 & 2. <i>Freiburg PO/Bollon.</i>	ⓑ 8 574083


Mathias Chor Wks. <i>St John's Voices/Gentlemen of St John's/Walker.</i>	ⓑ 8 574162
Mathias Songs & Chbr Wks. <i>Various artists.</i>	ⓑ 8 574053
Moravec Sanctuary Road. <i>Sols/Oratorio Society of New York/Trittle.</i>	ⓑ 8 559884
Pilati Orch Wks. <i>Moscow SO/Adriano.</i>	ⓑ 8 574168
Ravel Pf Wks. <i>Biret.</i>	ⓑ 8 571404
Reale Pf Wks. <i>Jensen.</i>	ⓑ 8 559879
Rossini Zelmira. <i>Sols/Virtuosi Brunensis/Gelmetti.</i>	Ⓢ ③ 8 660468/70

Rubinstein Pf Sons Nos 1 & 2. <i>Chen.</i>	ⓑ 8 573989
Tansman Cpte Wks for Solo Gtr, Vol 2. <i>De Vitis.</i>	ⓑ 8 573984
Tishchenko Hp Conc. <i>Marinutsa/Intl Parisian SO/Sugako.</i>	ⓑ 8 579048
Widor Org Syms, Vol 1. <i>Rübsam.</i>	ⓑ 8 574161

NIBIRU	<i>nibiru-publishers.com</i>
Reicha Requiem. <i>Armonia Terrena/Klauda.</i>	ⓕ 01662231
NILENTO	<i>nilentorecords.se</i>
Svensson Places & Dreams. <i>Svensson.</i>	ⓕ NILCD1905
NIMBUS	<i>wyastone.co.uk</i>
Blackford Pietà. <i>Johnston/Gadd/Dickson/Bournemouth SO/Carr.</i>	ⓕ NI6396
Schubert Pf Sons, Vol 6. <i>Feltsman.</i>	Ⓜ ② NI6392
NMC	<i>nmcrec.co.uk</i>
Various Cpsrs Spark Catchers. <i>Chineke! Orch.</i>	ⓕ NMCD250
ONDINE	<i>ondine.net</i>

Kõrvits Hymns to the Nordic Lights. <i>Estonian Nat SO/Joost.</i>	ⓕ ODE1349-2
-------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------

OUTHERE	<i>outhere-music.com</i>
Dvořák. Mozart. Tchaikovsky Romance – Arias. <i>Nafornitřa/Munich Rad Orch/Wilson, K-L.</i>	ⓕ OMF705
PENTATONE	<i>pentatonemusic.com</i>

Beethoven Syms Nos 5 & 7. <i>NDR Radiophilh/Manze.</i>	ⓕ PTC5186 814
Handel Concerti grossi, Op 6 Nos 7-12. <i>AAM Berlin/Forck.</i>	ⓕ  PTC5186 738
Haydn. Stamitz, C Wks for Fl, Ob & Orch. <i>Vega/Ortega Quero/Trondheim Sols.</i>	ⓕ PTC5186 823
Woolf, LP Fire & Flood. <i>Haimovitz/Novus NY/Wachner.</i>	ⓕ PTC5186 803

PIANO CLASSICS	<i>piano-classics.com</i>
Sorabji Sequentia cyclica. <i>Powell.</i>	Ⓜ ⑦ PCL10206
PROFIL	<i>haensslerprofil.de</i>
Various Cpsrs Collaboration – Chbr Wks with Gtr. <i>Wuttke/Various artists.</i>	ⓕ PH19067
Various Cpsrs Collection of East Classics. <i>Kubelik.</i>	Ⓢ ⑩ PH19019

RAMÉE	<i>outhere-music.com/ramee</i>
Various Cpsrs D'Amor mormora il vento. <i>Boz Galana.</i>	ⓕ RAM1909
RESONUS	<i>resonusclassics.com</i>
Tomkins O Give Thanks Unto the Lord. <i>Ch of HM Chapel Royal, Hampton Court Palace/Jackson, C.</i>	ⓕ RES10253
RICERCAR	<i>outhere-music.com/ricercar</i>
Schubert Schubertiade with Arpeggione. <i>Amoroso/Balestracci.</i>	ⓕ RIC409

SIGNUM	<i>signumrecords.com</i>
Ešenvalds There Will Come Soft Rains. <i>Pacific Lutheran Univ Ch of the West/Nance.</i>	ⓕ SIGCD603
Various Cpsrs Divine Muse – German & Italian Songs. <i>Bevan, M/Middleton.</i>	ⓕ SIGCD606
SOLO MUSICA	
Beethoven. Katzer Vc Sons. <i>Krah/Parz.</i>	ⓕ ② SM320
Cossoni Einsiedler Vesper. <i>Novantiqua Voc Ens, Berne/Kesselberg Ens.</i>	ⓕ SM326
Mahler. Reger. Zemlinsky Einsiedler. <i>Camerata Vocale Freiburg/Basel CO/Prégardien, C.</i>	ⓕ SM328
Schubert Winterreise (arr for Stg Qt). <i>Voyager Qt.</i>	ⓕ SM335

SOMM	<i>somm-recordings.com</i>
Schnittke. Smirnov. Stravinsky Russian Visions – Wks for Vc & Pf. <i>Vukotic/Firsova.</i>	ⓕ SOMMCD0606
Stanford Stg Qts Nos 1, 2 & 6. <i>Dante Qt.</i>	ⓕ SOMMCD0607
STEINWAY & SONS	<i>steinway.co.uk</i>
Bach, JS English Stes. <i>Rangell.</i>	Ⓜ ② STNS30136
STERLING	<i>sterlingcd.com</i>
Raff Benedetto Marcello (pp2002). <i>Sols incl Roth/SWR Rad Orch, Kaiserslautern/Nowak.</i>	Ⓜ ② CDO1123
STONE RECORDS	<i>stonerecords.co.uk</i>
Wolf Cpte Songs, Vol 10: Goethe Lieder, Part 1. <i>Sols/Kynoch.</i>	ⓕ 5060192 780918

SUPRAPHON	<i>supraphon.com</i>
Various Cpsrs French Arias. <i>Nekoranec/Czech PO/Franklin.</i>	ⓕ SU4260-2
SWEDISH SOCIETY	<i>swedishsociety.se</i>
Berg. Duparc. Rangström Orch Songs. <i>Byström/Helsingborg SO/Solyom.</i>	ⓕ SCD1168

TACTUS	<i>tactus.it</i>
Agnesi Arie con istromenti, 1749. <i>De Simone/Ens Il Mosaico.</i>	ⓕ TC720101
Pasculli Fantasies on Themes by Verdi. <i>Grazia/Orch Senzaspine.</i>	ⓕ TC841602

VIVAT	<i>vivatmusic.com</i>
Various Cpsrs Liederkreis: Decades – A Century of Song, Vol 4, 1840-50. <i>Sols/Martineau.</i>	ⓕ VIVAT119
WERGO	<i>vergo.de</i>
Roth Im Bau. <i>Ens Aequatuar.</i>	ⓕ WER7384-2
Various Cpsrs Big Data. <i>Decoder Ens.</i>	ⓕ WER7376-2

DVD & BLU-RAY

ARTHAUS MUSIK

Wagner Götterdämmerung (pp3008). *Sols/Staatskapelle Weimar/St Clair.*
(F) ②  **109407**; (F)  **109411**

BEL AIR CLASSIQUES

Verdi Traviata: Vous méritez un avenir meilleur. *Sols incl Chemla.*
(F)  **BAC156**; (F)  **BAC456**





CHÂTEAU DE VERSAILLES SPECTACLES
en.chateauversailles-spectacles.fr





Handel Messiah. *Sols incl Piau/Concert Spirituel/Niquet.*
(F)  **CVS013**

Various Cpsrs Sacre royal de Louis XIV. *Ens Correspondances/Daucé.*
(F)  **CVS017**








C MAJOR ENTERTAINMENT

Rossini Cenerentola (pp2016). *Sols/Rome Op/Pérez.*
(F)  **752408**; (F)  **752504**

DYNAMIC	<i>dynamic.it</i>
Donizetti Enrico di Borgogna (pp2018). <i>Sols incl Bonitatibus & Ganassi/Academia Montis Regalis/De Marchi.</i>	ⓕ  37833 ; ⓕ  57833
Paer Agnese (pp2019). <i>Sols/Regio Th, Turin/Fasolis.</i>	ⓕ  37850 ; ⓕ  57850

NAXOS	<i>naxos.com</i>
Bach, JS Wohltemperirte Clavier, Book 1 (pp2017). <i>Schiff.</i>	ⓕ  2 110653 ; ⓕ  NBD0104V
OPUS ARTE	
Benjamin Lessons in Love & Violence. Written on Skin. <i>Sols incl Hannigan/Royal Op/Benjamin.</i>	ⓕ ②  OA1309BD ; ⓕ ②  OABD7271BD

REVIEWS INDEX

A	Albéniz		Preludes and Fugues – BWV536; BWV539; BWV541; BWV545; BWV548; BWV550; BWV552; BWV543 64	Britten		E	Handel	
	Navarra (arr Sévéric) 70		Schübler Chorales, BWV645-650 64	Two Pieces, Op 23 69		Eller	Amore uccellatore, HWV176/175 76	
	Tango, Op 165 No 2 (arr Godowsky) 70		Toccata and Fugue, BWV565 64	Bruckner		Dawn 45	Figli del mesto cor, HWV112 76	
	Anonymous		Trio, BWV583 64	Symphony No 6  42		Night Calls 45	Music for the Royal Fireworks, HWV351 51	
	Ave maris stella 80		Trio Sonatas – BWV528; BWV529 64	Brumel		Twilight 45	Stanco di più soffrire, HWV167 <i>a</i> 76	
	En attendant vostre venue 77		Violin Concertos – BWV1041; BWV1042; BWV1052; BWV1053 38	Lamentationes Hieremiae prophetae, in feria sexta Parasceve 80		White Night 45	Udite il mio consiglio, HWV172 76	
	Jesus autem cum ieiunasset 80		Baldwin	Bryars		Esmail	Haydn	
	Multiplicati sunt qui tribulant me 80		In nomine 1606 61	In nomine 61		This Love Between Us, ‘Prayers for Unity’ 81	Harmoniemesse, HobXXII:14 46	
	Salve regina 80		Proportions to the Minim 61	Bull		F	Keyboard Concerto, HobXVIII:11 46,50	
	Verbum caro factum est a 4 80		Upon In nomine 1592 61	In nomine in 11/4 61		Ferrabosco	Symphonies – No 80; No 81 46	
B	Antheil		Barbingant	Byrd		In nomines in Six Parts – No 1; No 2 61	Symphony No 87 46	
	Symphony No 1, ‘Zingareska’ 38		Au travail suis que peu de gens croiroient 77	The Great Service – Nunc dimittis 80		In nomine Through All the Parts 61	Symphony No 99 46	
	Capital of the World – Suite 38		Bartók	C		Finzi	Henson	
	The Golden Bird 38		Concerto for Orchestra, Sz116 39	Chopin		Lo, the full, final sacrifice 80	Six Lethargies 0 99	
	McKonkey’s Ferry 38		Suite No 1, Op 3 Sz31 39	Cello Sonata, Op 65 57		Frances-Hoad	Henze	
	Nocturne in Skyrockets 38		Bax	Introduction and Polonaise brillante, Op 3 57		Between the Skies, the River and the Hills 50	Das Floss der Medusa 76	
	Babajanian		Hardanger 69	Nocturne No 5, Op 15 No 2 70		Stolen Rhythm 50	D Hill	
	Piano Trio  60		Moy Mell (The Happy Plain) 69	Compère		Franck	God be in my head 81	
	Bacewicz		The Poisoned Fountain 69	Paranymphus salutat virginem 80		Violin (Cello) Sonata 57	Hindemith	
	Violin Sonatas (cpte) 54		Beethoven	Copland		G	Ludus tonalis 103	
C	CPE Bach		Egmont – incidental music, Op 84 40	Piano Sonata 69		Gesualdo	Holland	
	Oboe Concertos – Wq164 H466; Wq165 H468 38		Die Geschöpfe des Prometheus, Op 43 40	D		O dolorosa gioia 75	The Intimacy of Harmony 71	
	Symphonies – Wq180 H655; Wq181 H656 38		Leonore – Act 2, Introduction, WoO2 40	Debussy		Secondo Libro di Madrigali 75	Hughes	
	JS Bach		Leonore Prohaska, WoO96 – Funeral March 40	La damoiselle élue 42		Gluck	Avoidance Tactics No 1 71	
	Adagio, BWV968 64		Six Minuets, WoO10 40	Hommage à Haydn 50		Orphée et Eurydice   86	Vestibulations – Suite No 1 71	
	Allabreve, BWV589 64		National Airs with Variations: Op 105 – No 3, Air autrichien; Op 107 – No 1, Air tirolien; No 2, Air écossais; No 6, Air écossais; No 7, Air russe 40	Marche écossaise sur un thème populaire 42		Orphée et Eurydice – Fortune ennemie 46	Hyla	
	Canonic Variations, BWV769 64		Piano Concertos (cpte) 100	Nocturnes 42		Gomes	Solo Cadenzas from My Life on the Plains 71	
	Cantata No 147 – Jesu bleibet meine Freude 51		Piano Sonatas (cpte) 100	Première Rapsodie 42		Lo schiavo   87	I	
	Canzona, BWV588 64		Piano Sonatas – No 4, Op 7; No 11, Op 22; No 12, Op 26 65	Les soirs illuminés par l’ardeur du charbon (orch C Matthews) 42		Granados	d’Indy	
	Chorale Partitas – BWV766; BWV767; BWV768 64		Piano Trios (cpte) 55	Delius		Goyescas – No 4, Quejas, ó La maja y el ruiseñor 70	Menuet sur le nom d’Haydn, Op 65 50	
D	Chorale Preludes – BWV654; BWV740 64		Piano Variations (cpte) 100	Sea Drift 0 98		Grétry	J	
	Christmas Oratorio – Suite 51		Piano Works (cpte) 100	Denisov		Les mariages samnites – Ô sort! par tes noires fureurs 46	Josquin	
	Concertos – BWV594; BWV596 64		Septet, Op 20 40	Variations on a Theme by Schubert 58		Grieg	Recordare virgo mater 80	
	Fantasias – BWV570; BWV572; BWV573 64		String Quartets (cpte) 56,100	Dowland		Lyric Pieces: Op 12 – No 1, Arietta; No 2, Waltz; No 5, Folk Song; Op 38 – No 1, Berceuse; Op 43 – No 2, Lonely Wanderer; No 4, Little Bird; No 6, To the Spring; Op 47 – No 4, Norwegian Dance; Op 54 – No 1, Shepherd Boy; Op 65 – No 6, Wedding Day at Trolldhaugen; Op 68 – No 3, At Your Feet; No 5, Cradle Song 70	K	
	Fantasias – BWV920; BWV922 64		Symphonies – No 5, Op 67; No 6, ‘Pastoral’, Op 68  41	All ye, whom love of fortune hath betray’d 74		Haapanen	Kellogg	
	Fantasy and Fugue, BWV537 64		Symphony No 9, ‘Choral’, Op 125 0 98	Can she excuse my wrongs 74		Compulsion Island 45	Shout joy! 81	
	Six French Suites, BWV812-817 64		Tarpeja, WoO2 – Triumphal March 40	Come again! 74		Flute Concerto 45	Khachaturian	
	Fugues – BWV575; BWV577; BWV579 64		Violin Concerto, Op 61 40	Come away, come sweet love 74		Ladies’ Room 45	Violin Concerto 45	
	Keyboard Sonata, BWV964 64		Violin Sonatas – No 3, Op 12 No 3; No 6, Op 30 No 1; No 7, Op 30 No 2; No 8, Op 30 No 3 54	Come, heavy sleep 74		Hadley	L	
	Kirnberger Chorales – BWV699; BWV704; BWV711; BWV714; BWV715; BWV717; BWV722; BWV729; BWV730; BWV731; BWV738; BWV741 64		Works for Cello and Piano (cpte) 54	Fine knacks for ladies 74		My beloved spake 80	Leighton	
E	Komm, süsser Tod (arr Stevenson) 68		Bennett	Flow, my tears 74		Hahn	Awake my glory 77	
	Leipzig Chorales – BWV657; BWV658; BWV659; BWV660; BWV661 64		Divertimento 69	Go crystal tears 74		Thème varié sur le nom de Haydn 50	Crucifixus pro nobis 77	
	Neumeister Chorales – BWV957; BWV1112; BWV1113; BWV1114; BWV1115; BWV1117; BWV1118; BWV1119; BWV1120 64		Bowen	If my complaints could passions move 74		Henson	Lift up your heads, O ye gates 77	
	Organ Works 0 99		Theme and Variations, Op 139 69	In darkness let me dwell 74		Harmoniemesse, HobXXII:14 46	Lully, lulla, thou little tiny child 77	
	Orgelbüchlein – BWV639; BWV640; BWV641; BWV642; BWV643; BWV644 64		Brahms	I saw my lady weep 74		Keyboard Concerto, HobXVIII:11 46,50	Missa Sancti Petri 77	
	Pastorale, BWV590 64		Four Ballades, Op 10 41	Mignarda 74		Symphonies – No 80; No 81 46	Of a rose is all my song 77	
	Prelude (Fantasia), BWV921 64		Ballade, Op 118 No 3 70	Now, O now, I needs must part 74		Symphony No 87 46	O sacrum convivium 77	
			Ein deutsches Requiem, Op 45 (London version) 74	O sweet woods 74		Symphony No 99 46	Wassail all over the town 77	
			Intermezzo, Op 118 No 1 70	Sorrow, sorrow stay 74		Hughes	What love is this of thine? 77	
			Piano Concerto No 1, Op 15 41	Wilt thou unkind thus reave me 74		Hindemith	Lemoyne	
F			Piano Pieces, Opp 116-119 36	Dukas		Haydn	Phèdre – Il va venir 46	
			Symphonies Nos 1-4 0 99	Prélude élégiaque 50		This Love Between Us, ‘Prayers for Unity’ 81	Ley	
				Dvořák		A Prayer of King Henry VI 80	Hill	
				Stabat mater, Op 58 B71 74			Hindemith	
				Violin Concerto, Op 53 B96 45			Ludus tonalis 103	
							Holland	
							The Intimacy of Harmony 71	
							Hughes	
							Avoidance Tactics No 1 71	
							Vestibulations – Suite No 1 71	

Liszt	
Les jeux d’eau à la Villa d’Este, S163 No 4	48
Réminiscences de Don Juan, S418	48
Sonetto 104 del Petrarca, S161 No 5	48
Un sospiro, S144 No 3	70
Liu	
Never Has Been Yet	71
Lully	
Isis	88

M

Marais	
Deuxième livre de Pièces de viole	57
Mathias	
Jesus Service, Op 53 – Magnificat	80
Maw	
One foot in Eden still, I stand	80
Mendelssohn	
Capriccio, Op 5	66
Three Fantaisies (or Caprices), Op 16	66
Fantasy, ‘Sonate écossaise’, Op 28	66
Kinderstücke, Op 72	66
Two Piano Pieces, WoO19	66
Rondo capriccioso, Op 14	66
Song without Words, Op 62 No 6	70
Variations, Op 82	66
Merrick	
Hebridean Seascape (arr Stevenson)	68
Mompou	
Scènes d’enfants – No 5, Jeune filles au jardin	70
Monteverdi	
Vespro della Beata Vergine (1610)	77
Moro	
Sancta Maria succurre miseris	80
Mozart	
Piano Sonatas – No 1, K279; No 4, K282; No 6, K284; No 9, K311	66
Requiem, K626	98
Muhly	
Slow (In nomine in Five Parts)	61
Mussorgsky	
Night on the Bare Mountain (arr Rimsky-Korsakov/Chernov)	66

N

O

Ockeghem	
Aultre Venus estes sans faille	77
D’un autre amer mon coeur s’abesseroit	77
Fors seulement contre ce qu’ay promis/Fors seulement l’actente	77
Fors seulement l’actente que je meure	77
Ma maistresse et ma plus grant amye	77
Mort tu as navré de ton dart/Miserere	77
O rosa bella	77
Permanent vierge/Pulcra es/ Sancta dei genitrix	77
Quant de vous seul je pers la veue	77
S’elle m’amera/Petite camusecte	77
Se vostre cuer eslongne moy a tort	77

Offenbach	
Boule de neige – Overture; La valse du divorce	79
Les bavards – Overture; C’est l’Espagne	79
Les deux aveugles – Overture	79
Six Fables de La Fontaine	79
Madame Favart – Overture	79
Monsieur Choufleuri – Overture	79
Schüler Polka	79
Olson	
Magnificat	81

P

Paderewski	
Nocturne, Op 16 No 4	70
Parry	
I was glad	80
Service No 2, ‘The Great’ – Magnificat	80
Parsons	
In nomines in Seven Parts – IV; V	61
Perle	
Serenades Nos 1-3	58
Piazzolla	
Le Grand Tango	57
Prokofiev	
Piano Sonatas – No 3, Op 28; No 8, Op 84; No 9, Op 103	67
The Tales of an Old Grandmother, Op 31	66
Purcell	
The Fairy Queen	99
Three Grounds (arr Stevenson)	68
Hornpipe, Z T685	70
Hornpipe (arr Stevenson)	68
In nomine in Seven Parts, Z747	61
‘Music for a While’	99
Music for the Funeral of Queen Mary, Z860/58c	51
‘O Solitude’	99
The Queen’s Dolour (A Farewell) (arr Stevenson)	68
Sonata, Z850	51
Toccata (arr Stevenson)	68

R

Rachmaninov	
Cello Sonata, Op 19	58
Preludes, Op 32 – No 10; No 12	70
Ragué	
Symphony, Op 10 No 1	46
Rakowski	
Three Préludes	71
Ravel	
Boléro	47
Menuet sur le nom d’Haydn	50
Rimsky-Korsakov	
Sheherazade, Op 35 (arr Gilson)	66
Rossini	
Ricciardo e Zoraide	88
Rubbra	
Service in A flat – Magnificat	80
Rubinstein	
Mélodie, Op 3 No 1	70
Rzewski	
Four North American Ballads – No 2, Which Side Are You On?; No 4, Winnsboro Cotton Mill Blues	69

S

Sacchini	
Chimène, ou Le Cid – C’est votre bonté que j’implore	46
Saint-Saëns	
Le carnaval des animaux	46
Symphonies – No 1, Op 2; in A	46
D Scarlatti	
Keyboard Sonatas – Kk64; Kk377	70
Schnittke	
Life with an Idiot – Tango	60
Schubert	
Notturmo, D897	58
Piano Trio No 2, D929	58
Symphony No 9, ‘Great’, D944	47
C Schumann	
Geheimes Flüstern hier und dort (arr Liszt)	70
Konzertsatz (exc)	70
Polonaise, Op 1 No 1	70
Prelude, Op 16	70
Romances – Op 5 No 3; Op 11 No 1	70
R Schumann	
Arabesque, Op 18	70
Erster Verlust, Op 68 No 16	70
Intermezzo, Op 26	70
Kind im Einschlummern, Op 15 No 12	70
Piano Sonata No 2, Op 22 – 1st movt	70
Romance, Op 28 No 2	70
Widmung, Op 25 No 1	70
Scriabin	
Poème, Op 32 No 1	70
Sgambati	
Mélodie de Gluck	70
Shostakovich	
Cello Sonata, Op 40	58
Three Fantastic Dances, Op 5	70
String Quartets – No 13, Op 138; No 14, Op 142; No 15, Op 144	60
Sibelius	
Kullervo, Op 7	79
Silvestrov	
Five Elegies, Op 35	68
Melodies of the Moments, Op 145	68
Three Pieces, Op 9	68
Four Pieces, Op 63	68
Three Pieces, Op 80	68
Four Pieces, Op 97	68
Three Waltzes, Op 62	68
Two Waltzes, Op 74	68
Smetana	
Má vlast	98
Stanford	
Service in B flat – Nunc dimittis	80
Service in G – Nunc dimittis	80
Stefani	
The Supposed Miracle, or Cracovians and Highlanders	89
Stevenson	
Barra Flyting Toccata	68
Chorale-Pibroch for Sorley Maclean	68
Keening Song for a Makar (in memoriam Francis George Scott)	68
Little Jazz Variations on Purcell’s ‘New Scotch Tune’	68

Norse Elegy for Ella Nygard	68
Recitative and Air on DSCH	68
Threepenny Sonatina (on Kurt Weill’s Threepenny Opera)	68
Toccata-Reel, ‘The High Road to Linton’	68
Stojowski	
Vers l’azur, Op 39 No 1	70
R Strauss	
Don Juan, Op 20	47
Don Quixote, Op 35	47
Ständchen, Op 17 No 2 (arr Godowsky)	70
Till Eulenspiegels lustige Streiche, Op 28	47

T

Tchaikovsky	
Piano Concerto No 1, Op 23	48
Piano Trio, Op 50	60
Symphony No 6, ‘Pathétique’, Op 74	98
Violin Concerto, Op 35	99
Telemann	
Trumpet Concerto, TWV51:D7	51
Traditional	
Kad ja podoh na Bentbašu	50
Tye	
Howlde Fast	61
Re la re	61
Reporte	61

V

Vaughan Williams	
Saraband ‘Helen’	48
Symphonies – No 3, ‘Pastoral’; No 4	48
Verdi	
Le trouvère	90
Vivaldi	
Bassoon Concerto, RV495	90
Cello Concerto, RV416	90
Concertos – RV93; ‘L’amoroso’, RV271; RV481; RV534; RV553; RV564 <i>a</i> ; ‘Amato bene’, RV761	48
Farnace – Gelido in ogni vena	90
Giustino – Vedrò con mio diletto	90
Griselda – Agitata da due venti	90
Juditha triumphans, RV644 – Armate face et anguibus; Veni, veni me sequere fida	90
Lute Concerto, RV93	90
Nisi Dominus, RV608 – Cum dederit	90
L’Olimpiade – Mentre dormi, amor fomenti	90
Ottone in villa – Sinfonia	48
Vogel	
Démophon – Âge d’or, ô bel âge	46

W

Wagner	
Der fliegende Holländer	91
Walton	
A Litany	80
Ward	
In nomine in Five Parts	61
Weelkes	
Short Service – Magnificat	80

Weinberg	
Chamber Symphonies – No 1, Op 145; No 3, Op 151	50
Piano Trio, Op 24	60
Three Pieces	60
Sonatas for Solo Cello (cpte)	68
Violin Sonata No 6, Op 136 <i>bis</i>	60
Weir	
Ascending into Heaven	80
Widor	
Fugue sur le nom d’Haydn	50
R Williams	
A New England Symphony	81
Wolfe	
Compassion	69
Fire in my Mouth	79
C Wood	
Oculi omnium	80
Service No 2 in E flat – Nunc dimittis	80
Woolf	
... nobody move ...	71

Collections

‘American Rage’ – Conrad Tao	69
“B” Like Britain’ – Ludmila Berlinskaya, Arthur Ancelle	69
‘The Complete RCA and Columbia Album Collection’ – Rudolf Firkušný	102
‘The Complete RCA and Columbia Album Collection’ – Raymond Lewenthal	96
‘Concertos and Symphonies’ – George Szell	102
‘The Decca 78s’ – Erich Kleiber, Jean Martinon	103
‘Edition’ – Paul Badura-Skoda	103
‘Encores’ – Nelson Freire	70
‘Evensong Live 2019’ – The Choir of King’s College, Cambridge	80
‘From Darkness Into Light’ – Musica Secreta	80
‘I, Clara – Clara Schumann: A Life in Music’ – Lucy Parham	70
‘In nomine II’ – Fretwork	61
‘The Last Concert’ – Vladimir Horowitz	98
‘New England Choirworks’ – Yale Schola Cantorum	81
‘... nobody move ...: Commissions and Premieres for the New Gallery Concert Series’ – Sarah Bob	71
‘Origins’ – Ivana Gavrić	50
‘Royal Fireworks’ – Alison Balsom	51
‘Wien’ – Jonas Kaufmann	99

Simon Callow

The actor, director and author on his slow-burn relationship with the great composer

I came late to Beethoven. My grandmother was a singer, long retired, and she had a huge collection of shellac records, mostly vocal – *verismo* usually, which was her particular taste. She also had a few big concertos – Grieg, Tchaikovsky, Rachmaninov – which all seemed to express some private and personal drama. Beethoven didn't get much of a look in. Too universal, too epic, no doubt. She had a wonderful recording by Solomon of the *Pathétique* Sonata which we all thought was very beautiful, but not a patch on Tchaikovsky's symphony.

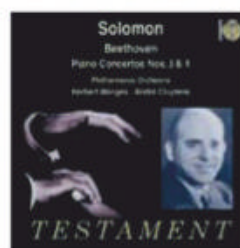
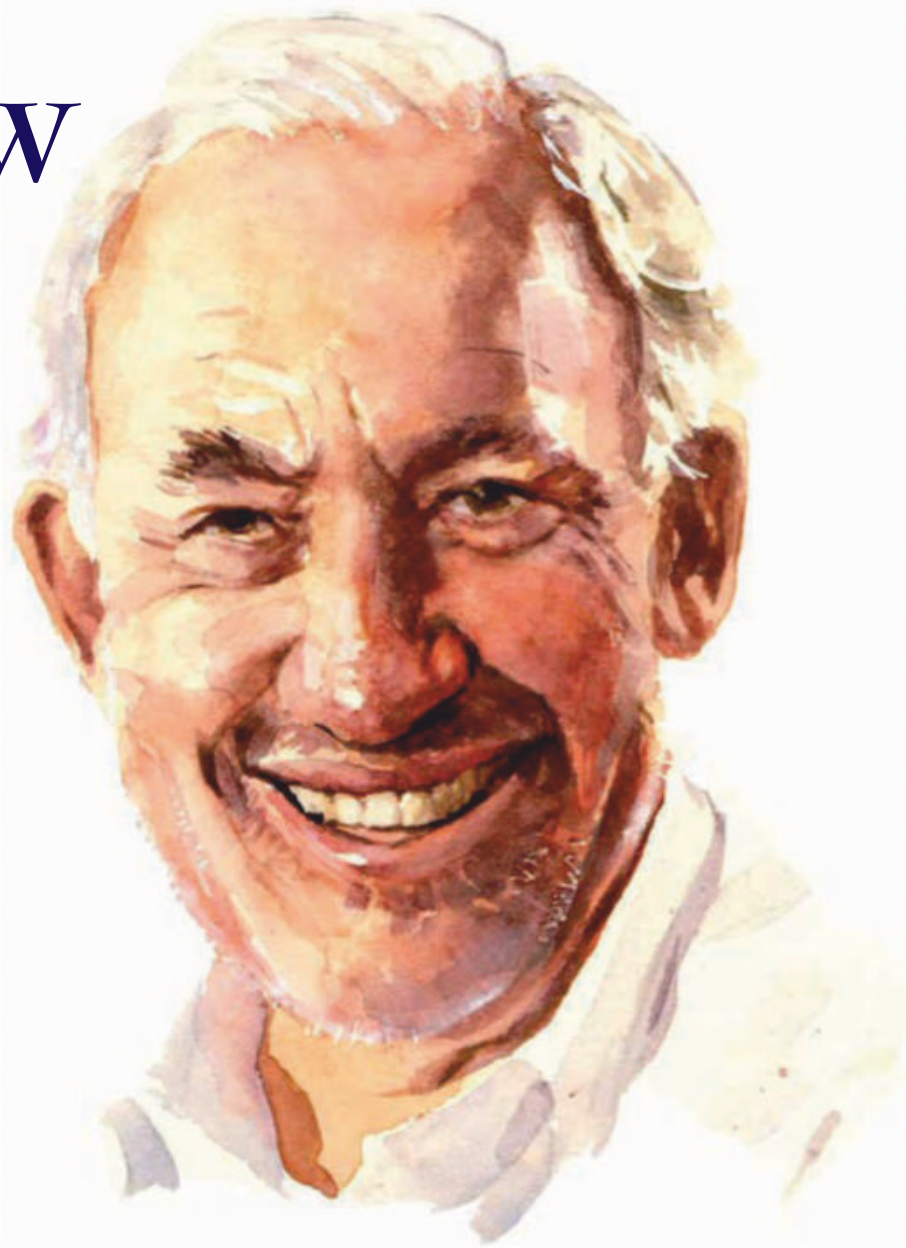
What I've always felt about listening to Beethoven is that the process of composition is contained within the music itself. You're in the workshop with him, at his forge hammering away. Awe-inspiring but a bit exhausting. I wasn't sure when I was young that awe was what I wanted from music. I had already fallen in love with Mozart, where the music seems to have composed itself.

Hearing the *Eroica* for the first time, though, was a huge jolt. Before your very ears, he refashions the symphony, changes its horizons. It's like Michelangelo painting the Sistine Chapel ceiling. The *Eroica* puts an epic universe in front of you. It was stupendous, but alarming, like looking down into the Grand Canyon. A remark by the great Irish actor Micheál Mac Liammóir rather summed up my view at the time: 'I'm afraid that Beethoven, like the Christian view of heaven, is too good for likes of me.'

I still have a bit of a problem with symphonies like the Fifth – maybe just from over-exposure. The *Eroica*, though, to me, is one of the absolute towering achievements of art in the Western world. As, for me, is the Seventh – when I first heard it the Seventh drove me just crazy with pleasure. Every single part of it. Wagner's description of it as the 'apotheosis of the dance' hits the nail on the head. But the Ninth ... too good for the likes of me.

Fidelio is an interesting case: again, you hear in it the stress of Beethoven trying to create in a form that is somehow alien to him. I saw Peter Ebert's Scottish Opera production in the early 1970s, straightforward as could be; no Konzept or anything like that. It was direct and engaging. But when the prisoners emerged into the light I had one of the greatest moments, even to the present time, that I've ever had in a theatre. It's at moments like that, when you encounter Beethoven's cosmic compassion, rather than a sort of intimate, personal compassion for this character or that character, that he's peerless.

The *Fidelio* recording I love is the live Klemperer from Covent Garden with Sena Jurinac – hewn out of rock. I was lucky enough to see Klemperer quite often in the flesh, including the whole of a Festival Hall Beethoven cycle with the New Philharmonia. Ancient and ailing, there was nothing fragile about him: the music making was made of granite –



THE RECORD I COULDN'T LIVE WITHOUT

Beethoven Piano Concerto No 4 **Solomon;**
Philharmonia Orch / André Cluytens (Testament)

I absolutely adore Solomon's recording of the Fourth Piano Concerto that I grew up on. There's something so utterly sovereign about it.

rather stiff-jointed in the Eighth, for example – but there was something about it that completely connected with Beethoven.

The composer's increasing encasement in deafness gives a unique character to his later music, the sort of thing you find in painters who are going blind, who reach towards something remembered, something intensified, something beyond the merely visual. Beethoven by this stage of his life is beyond the merely musical.

I was, when younger, really a bit daunted – cowed – by it. It was rather like entering a cathedral when what one wanted was a church or a maybe just a chapel – something on a human scale. As one gets older one's perhaps more comfortable with the sublime. I suppose it's why we reach for, let's say, the *Hammerklavier* or the late quartets: they're going to take us to somewhere utterly beyond our comprehension, to accompany a dauntless hero on a journey towards the unknown region where we're all headed.

About eight years ago, I played Beethoven, the man, that is, for a concert Gerard McBurney had devised for the Chicago Symphony Orchestra. Then of course we were dealing with the intimate life and his personal struggles and his complex relationship with his nephew, and I came to rather to love him – as a man rather than as a Titan. **G**

MARTIN
RANDALL

FESTIVALS

ATOL 3622 ABTA Y6050 AITO 5085

Venice

Pageantry & Piety

CELEBRATING MUSIC AND PLACE

2–7 NOVEMBER 2020

Seven private concerts of Venetian music in beautiful halls and churches in Venice.

At a private concert in St Mark's Basilica, Andrew Parrott's Taverner Consort & Players perform Monteverdi's '1610 Vespers'.

Paul McCreesh's Gabrieli Consort & Players, La Serenissima and Modo Antiquo are among the line up of the finest living interpreters of Venetian music.

Confirmed soloists include Roberta Mameli, Joanne Lunn and Renata Pokupić.

A thoughtfully curated experience with lectures by musicologists, accommodation, travel and dinners included.

Illustration: Canaletto, 'Bucentaur's return to the pier by Palazzo Ducale'.

Find out more: +44 (0)20 8742 3355 | martinrandall.com/festivals